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CENTRAL TRUTHS AND
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CENTRAL TRUTHS

AND

SIDE ISSUES

BY


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PREFACE.

IN issuing this volume the author has acted on the advice of valued friends, who are of opinion that the discussions which it contains may prove helpful, not merely to professional theologians, but to that large class of intelligent men and women who are now interested in Biblical questions. The papers have been written at intervals during the course of a long and busy ministry, but they have all been carefully revised, and some of them entirely re-written and considerably enlarged. They are somewhat miscellaneous, as the title is intended to suggest. The first three relate to Central Truths, the Incarnation and Atonement of our Lord being the heart and centre of the Christian system. The last three raise what may be called Side Issues, for the questions with which they deal, though interesting and important, do not, like the others, constitute the very foundations of the faith. In the discussions that follow the author has sought to bring out his own views with uncompromising clearness, while endeavouring to look at the views of others from their standpoint, and to

state them fairly. How far he has succeeded it is for the intelligent reader to judge.

The author has pleasure in acknowledging his obligations to the Rev. A. Morris Stewart, M.A., for his great kindness in undertaking the preparation of the Index.

EDINBURGH, *December* 1894.

CENTRAL TRUTHS AND SIDE ISSUES.

I.

THE INCARNATION AND HUMILIATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

IT is to the opening verses of the fourth gospel that we naturally turn for the most formal and explicit statement of this "great mystery of godliness." We are there told of the existence of one whom the Evangelist calls "the Word." He was in the beginning. He stood in a certain relation to God, and yet He was God. He was the Creator of all things, the possessor of life—a life which was the light of men. Of this wonderful Being it is said that He "became flesh and dwelt among us." The writer had been moving in a high and transcendental region where the most powerful imagination flagged in the attempt to follow him, when suddenly he swoops down to this lower world, and in one brief sentence shows the deep personal interest which we all have in this lofty theme. Let us not for a moment imagine that the

Incarnation of the Son of God is a mere speculative dogma on which theologians may exercise their faculties, and controversialists may cross their swords, but which is too abstruse and unpractical for ordinary Christians to meddle with. So far from this, the subject is one which touches us at every point of our daily life, and lies at the foundation of all our hopes for the life that is to come. It may be difficult, nay impossible, for us to understand how the Eternal Word could ever ally Himself with human nature in a union so close that it could be said that He was "made flesh," yet the fact itself is one that the humblest and most unlettered Christian feels to be of infinite importance.

In discussing this subject, we do not need to enter into any proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. That may well be pre-supposed. We may proceed on the assumption that the Divine Being is not simply and absolutely one, but that within the unity of the Godhead there are three *ὑποστάσεις* or persons, consubstantial, co-eternal; the same in substance, equal in power and glory. What we have now to consider is the statement of Scripture, that the second of these Persons, the Son, the Eternal Word, did in the fulness of time reveal Himself in human form as the man Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the world. What we propose to do is to attempt to form as accurate a conception as possible of the union thus formed between the divine and human nature, especially during the period of our Lord's humiliation.

The importance of this inquiry, and yet its difficulty, are both very obvious. Its importance appears from the fundamental place which the Incarnation holds in the scheme of revealed truth. The coming of the Son of God in the flesh was an indispensable step to the salvation of the human race. And as we are saved, not in a magical way, by some mysterious virtue secretly imparted to our souls, but through the exercise of an intelligent faith of which Jesus is the object, it is of essential moment that we have as clear and distinct an idea of the person in whom we are to believe as we can possibly attain. An error on a matter so fundamental must be serious, and cannot fail to affect our whole conceptions of the way of salvation. The inquiry, therefore, is important; but it is at the same time very difficult. The whole subject lies in a region that is full of mystery. It is only by means of human analogies that we can form any idea of divine things, and here these analogies almost entirely fail us. We are absolutely dependent on the statements of Holy Scripture, for the doctrine is one of pure revelation; and in regard to the Incarnation, the teaching of Scripture is not presented to us in a complete and systematic form, but incidentally and in fragments, with a view to practical issues and religious ends.

The importance and the difficulty of the question we propose to discuss may be gathered from the conflicts which have raged around it. The great enemy, who makes it his business to sow tares wherever the

good seed of the Word has previously been scattered, began his work by sowing seeds of error in the hearts of men regarding the person of Jesus Christ. The first heresies that the early Church had to contend with were not directed against the work of the Holy Spirit, or the Atonement of Jesus Christ, but against the constitution of His person. To mention only a few of these, there was first the Doketic heresy, which pretended to do honour to the divine nature of the Saviour by representing His human nature, with all its experiences of bodily suffering and mental anguish, as a mere show or phantasm—a doctrine of which there is some indication in a work so ancient as the the recently discovered Gospel of Peter. Then came the error of Apollinaris, who maintained that Jesus had no human mind or spirit, but only flesh and an animal soul, the Logos taking the place and exercising the functions of a human mind. Then came the doctrine of Nestorius, who tried to solve the problem of the union of the divine and human in Emmanuel by holding that He was possessed of a twofold personality as well as a twofold nature. This was followed by a natural reaction to the opposite extreme: Eutyches and the Monophysites not only maintaining the unity of Christ's person, but contending that the two natures were so united as to be practically one. It might seem, indeed, as if, even at that early date, every possible theory of the theanthropic union had been exhausted, and that when the mind of the Church had been deliberately made up and expressed re-

garding these alternatives, the subject would be set aside as one that needed not any further to be discussed. And accordingly for many hundred years there was a very general acquiescence in the formulated deliverances of the great Councils on the sense in which the doctrine of the Incarnation was to be understood.

At the Reformation, however, there was a wonderful waking up of the minds of men on theological as well as literary questions. A spirit of inquiry was abroad. Things were boldly canvassed that had been at one time most implicitly received, and doctrines were opened up for reconsideration that had been supposed to be for ever settled and set at rest. The unhappy Sacramentarian controversy, in particular, that soon broke out between the Lutherans and the Reformed, could not fail to raise questions regarding the manner of the subsistence of the two natures in the person of the Redeemer, which were deeper and more far-reaching than any that had been discussed by the early Church. The obstinacy with which Luther clung to the strictly literal interpretation of the words uttered by Jesus at the institution of the Supper, "This is My body," led his followers, in the exercise of a remorseless logic, to frame a theory of the Incarnation which implied that not merely the soul, but the very body of Christ was invested with the peculiar prerogatives of Godhead. For, if the literal flesh and blood of the Saviour were present, as they contended, in, with, or under the

bread and wine, wherever the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered, it was obvious that the body of Jesus might be at once in heaven and on earth,—at the right hand of the Father, and on a hundred Communion Tables at the same moment. This could only be because the union between the Logos and the human nature of Christ was such as to invest the one nature with the properties of the other. Against this doctrine the Reformed Churches firmly protested, holding that it introduced inextricable confusion into the whole subject, and that it involved the deification of the human nature rather than the incarnation of the divine.

This controversy, after having been fiercely agitated between the followers of Luther and Calvin for a time, gradually died out, other and more fundamental questions being forced on men's minds during the reign of Rationalism. Within the present century, however, the question has again been raised with the view of finding some common ground on which a union between the Lutherans and the Reformed might be accomplished without the sacrifice of principle on either side. With this object in view the discussion has been carried on, as might have been anticipated, in a more calm and philosophic temper. These efforts at reconciliation have taken four different directions,—represented by Thomasius, Gess, Ebrard, and Martensen. The different views taken by these four theologians have been stated so clearly and succinctly by Dr Bruce in his able work on "The Humiliation of

Christ " as to make it difficult to give a briefer epitome of their doctrines.¹

THOMASIUS, while professing to stand on the old Lutheran ground, in reality abandons it ; for, while the old Lutherans raised the finite human nature of Christ to the infinite, he attempts to solve the difficulty in the opposite way,—by lowering the infinite divine nature of Christ to the level of the finite. He holds that the Logos, the Son of God, in assuming human nature, altogether divested Himself for a time of the divine manner of existence, of the divine glory which He had with the Father from the beginning, and even of the divine attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. Yet He did not cease even then to be divine, for it is maintained that these are not *essential* attributes of God. What was essential was absolute power in the sense of free self-determination, absolute truth in the sense of knowledge of His own being and of His Father's mind, absolute holiness and love. These He retained and exercised, these He gloriously displayed as the incarnate Son of God, even in the lowest depth of His humiliation.

GESS, while professing, like Thomasius, to accept the decision of the Council of Chalcedon, which condemned the views of Apollinaris, advocates a doctrine

¹ We desire gratefully to acknowledge our great indebtedness to Dr Bruce for his masterly treatise, which leaves nothing to be desired, so far as the exposition of the various Kenotic theories is concerned. The only defect of the volume, and it is a serious one, is this, that it leaves the reader at a loss to know whether the author has any theory of his own to propose in place of those which he regards with more or less dissatisfaction.

which is substantially the same as his. Apollinaris held that Christ had no human soul, because there was no need and no room for one, the Logos taking the place and exercising the functions of a soul. Gess admits that the Church was right in condemning that doctrine and affirming that Christ had a human soul ; but then, he says, they did not see that the Logos was that soul. This looks very like a mere quibble, but it certainly brings out in the strongest possible way how completely Gess regarded the Logos as laying aside every attribute of Deity when He consented to unite Himself to our human nature. He did not *assume*, He *became* for the time being, a *human* soul, while in some mysterious and inexplicable way still retaining the essence of the divine nature. At some time in the life of Jesus Christ, and by some means which we can only conjecture, the Logos within Him became conscious of His own divine nature ; but it was only when Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven that the Son of God resumed those divine perfections which He had temporarily laid aside.

EBRARD, an able representative of the Reformed Church, agrees with Gess in holding that the Eternal Word, in the exercise of His free, self-determining power, lowered Himself to the position of a human soul when He assumed human nature. But then he holds that He did not in so doing lose or lay aside His divinity, but merely *disguised* it. Thus He did not divest Himself of His omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, but retained them *in an applied form*.

He was not omnipotent in relation to the entire universe, but in reference to objects presenting themselves to Him in space and time, having an unlimited power of working miracles. He was omniscient in the same sense, having an unlimited power of insight into any objects which He wished to know. And He was omnipresent in the sense that He was able to transport Himself whither He would. Ebrard believes in the possession by Christ of two natures in one person, but he puts a peculiar meaning on the word *nature*. He holds that the Son of God, giving up the form of eternity and entering into time-form, made for Himself a human body, soul, and spirit. The divine nature is the essence, and the human nature the form. He is not partly God and partly man, but wholly man; for He is a divine person who has made Himself a human person.

MARTENSEN, the eminent Danish theologian, takes a different, and, as it appears to us, a more intelligible and Scriptural view of the meaning of the Incarnation. He believes that the Eternal Logos in the womb of the Virgin was an immature child, but that in the course of His growth He became conscious of Himself both as a human and as a divine being. He was true God when on earth, but under the limits imposed by human consciousness. We see in Christ the fullness of the Godhead within the compass of humanity. This emptying of Himself, however, is quite compatible, not only with essential Deity in the Son of Man, but with the continued existence of the Logos, possessed

of all His divine perfections, as the Mediator and Revealer for the world at large. Martensen does not explicitly say whether he believes that Jesus Christ had a human soul distinct from the Logos or divine nature. Nor does he attempt to explain how the Logos could have a dual existence, filling the universe in His eternal form and united to the man Christ Jesus in His time-form.

Such are some of the recent speculations on the subject of the mode of the Incarnation,—and the measure of self-emptying on the part of the Son of God which that implied,—which have arisen from an attempt to formulate some agreement between the Lutherans and the Reformed. It is a question whether any of them will appear perfectly satisfactory to any but their authors; and Dr Bruce in particular, who has made them a subject of special study, seems on the whole to be of that opinion. The question of the Kenosis, or self-humiliation of our Lord, has not yet been much discussed in this country, partly perhaps because it has been regarded as a matter of very abstruse and not very profitable speculation. There seems, however, some prospect at present of its attracting more notice in connection with a distinctly practical interest. For the appeal has been made, notably by Bishop Ellicot, to the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ in opposition to the views of the Higher Criticism with regard to the Old Testament Scriptures. That appeal has been met by the assertion that the knowledge of our Lord in the days of

His flesh was not unlimited. This at once raises the the whole question of the relation of the two natures in the Son of Man.

The orthodox view of this subject, based upon a careful collation of Scripture statements, but brought into precise and definite form by ages of controversy, is thus stated in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly:—“The only Mediator of the covenant of grace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, of one substance and equal with the Father, in the fulness of time became man, and so was and continues to be God and man, in two entire distinct natures, and one person, for ever.” If the question is raised as to the *person* of the Mediator, whether that is divine or human, the answer must be, Divine. It was the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us. It was He who was in the form of God that took upon Him the form of a servant. The personality was that of the eternal Son of God. The second Person of the glorious Trinity did not, and could not, lose His personal identity, when He entered into union with the human nature and appeared on earth as the Child of Mary. He did not assume into personal union with Himself a full-grown man, with a distinct and fully-developed personality of His own, but simply human nature, with all its essential parts and properties, but without any personal subsistence. Had it been otherwise, there would have been two persons as well as two natures in the Mediator. In that case there would have been two Christs and not

one only. Such a supposition is inadmissible for many reasons, and therefore we must hold that when it pleased the eternal Son of God to assume human nature, and to be miraculously conceived and born of the Virgin Mary, He assumed it at a stage of its existence prior to its possessing any personality of its own. Any such human personality was anticipated and prevented—rendered unnecessary, and indeed impossible—by the previous union of that nature with the person of the Eternal Word.¹

¹ Dr Owen, a very weighty authority on this subject, says in his great work on “The Person of Christ”: “The Eternal Word, the Son God, was not made flesh, not made of a woman, nor of the seed of David, by the conversion of His substance or nature into flesh; which implies a contradiction,—and, besides, is absolutely destructive of the divine nature. He could no otherwise, therefore, be made flesh, or made of a woman, but in that our nature was made His by His assuming it to be His own. The same person—who before was not flesh, was not man—was made flesh as man, in that He took our human nature to be His own” (chap. xviii. p. 225). “Although the person of Christ, as God and Man, be constituted by this union, yet His person absolutely, and His individual subsistence, was perfect absolutely antecedent unto that union. He did not become a new person, another person than He was before, by virtue of that union; only that person assumed human nature to itself to be its own, into personal subsistence” (p. 229). “There is a threefold communication of the divine nature unto the human in this hypostatical union: (1) Immediate in the person of the Son. This is subsistence. In itself it is *ἀνυπόστατος*,—that which hath not a subsistence of its own, which should give it individuation and distinction from the same nature in any other person. But it hath its subsistence in the person of the Son, which thereby is its own. The divine nature, as in that person, is its *suppositum*” (p. 233). Dr Goold’s edition.

Bishop Westcott thus brings out the practical bearing of these apparently subtle and scholastic distinctions. “And here let me ask you to observe carefully how under this aspect we can see the importance of the deepest Articles of our Creed. We can see, poor as our thoughts are, that the doctrines of the Divine Conception of the Lord

But now another difficulty arises in connection with the twofold nature of the Mediator. In the previous case the thing to be guarded was the unity of the Person. This was of essential moment, for if there were two Persons as well as two natures, there was no true and proper Incarnation. Two distinct and independent Beings linked together, however closely, would most assuredly not answer to the description which Scripture gives us of God manifest in the flesh. In that case, too, the atoning sacrifice of Christ would be nugatory and vain, the sufferings belonging to the one person, and the divine nature, which alone gave them their expiatory virtue, belonging to the other. Here the thing to be guarded is the distinctness of the natures. We must not allow ourselves to imagine that the divine nature swallowed up the human, or the human the divine. The entire Gospel narrative proves that the humanity of Christ was not merged in His divinity, for we see Him there

and of the unchanged Personality of the Eternal Son of God are no speculative dogmas. We can see that they give a historic foundation to a living faith. If Christ had been born as other men, He would have been one man of many, limited by an individual manhood, and not in very truth the Son of Man, the perfect representative of the whole race. If He had not been born, taking of human substance from His mother and growing with human growth, He would have had no perfect or real connection with those whom He was pleased to make His brethren. We can see that the Divine Personality of the Son, the Son of God, the Son of Man, harmonises the two facts of a true manhood and a universal manhood in Christ, and gives to His humanity that absolute completeness in which each man to the end of time can find the fulfilment of his partial nature, and through which the will of God could be accomplished once for all under the conditions of earthly existence.”—“The Victory of the Cross,” p. 43.

as the man Christ Jesus, having a body and a soul like those of other men, possessing the powers and infirmities, the joys and the sorrows, that are common to man, made in all points like unto His brethren, sin alone excepted. On the other hand, while His possession of a true human nature is the thing that appears most conspicuously in the days of His flesh, there are not wanting indications that He was still divine. For does not this same Jesus of Nazareth, who agonised in Gethsemane and bled on Calvary, claim to be the light of the world, following whom men shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life? Does He not offer to quench the thirst of all who will come to Him and drink of the living water? Does He not invite all the weary and heavy laden sons of men to come to Him and rest? And does He not even say, "Before Abraham was I am"; "I and My Father are one"? Neither nature, therefore, was merged in the other, although the emphasis is laid sometimes on the human and sometimes on the divine.

Nor are we to endeavour to solve the mystery, or make it less perplexing, by imagining that the two natures united in one Person so modified one another as to result in the formation of something different from either, a *tertium quid*, a sort of composite or hybrid nature, in which divine and human attributes were curiously blended. No, we are constrained by the whole teaching of Scripture on the subject to hold that in the incarnate Logos each nature retains

its distinct and specific character, the Logos losing none of His divine perfections, though now united to the human nature, and the human nature not being invested with the attributes of Deity.

The great difficulty arises when we try to conceive of such a union under the conditions to which Christ was subjected during His life on earth. It is not so hard to conceive of Him in His present state of exaltation as possessing a divine nature which is almighty, omnipresent, and omniscient, and a human nature which, though glorified, is still subject to local limitations. We must, indeed, endeavour to find room in our minds for such a conception, if we believe that He is still truly man, even though we may be at a loss to see how this is compatible with the unity of His person. But when we think of Him as He was when here on earth, the Child of Mary, the Carpenter of Nazareth, the Son of Man, the crucified Saviour, can we imagine that at every stage of this experience He was in full possession and exercise of all the divine perfections? Nay, does not the Apostle Paul distinctly tell us that during that period the Logos emptied Himself (ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσε),¹ exchanging the form of God for the form of a servant? The question we have now to consider is, What is the meaning of this remarkable expression? What did this emptying of Himself amount to?

Are we to hold, with Apollinaris, that the Eternal Word emptied Himself of His divine prerogatives by

¹ Phil. ii. 7.

consenting to take the place and exercise the functions of a human mind or spirit, in connection with the human nature of Jesus Christ, which on that hypothesis consisted merely of flesh and an animal soul? We may well dismiss this alternative as an antiquated and exploded heresy. It has no foundation whatever in Scripture. It seems incompatible with such statements as these: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,"¹ "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."² And, more particularly, it is inconsistent with any true and proper union of God and man, for it teaches that the Son of God assumed only a part, and that the least important part, of human nature.

Are we then to hold, with Gess and Godet, that the self-emptying of the Logos consisted in His stripping Himself for a time of all but the essence of Deity, depotentiating Himself so completely as to have no divine attributes left, and to be reduced to the level of a human soul? This view is open to the gravest possible objections. In the first place, it is scarcely distinguishable from that of Apollinaris. If, to escape from this, it is maintained that besides the depotentiated Logos Christ had also a human soul, then He must have had two souls or spirits, which would be as monstrous as to have two heads. In the second place, it seems to involve, what is not merely unthinkable, but absolutely impossible, that the second Person of the Godhead should cease to have any divine

¹ Matt. xxvi. 38.

² Luke xxiii. 46.

perfections, and yet continue to be God. In the third place, this abdication by the Logos of all divine attributes and functions for more than thirty years would have implied the breaking-up for that period of the Eternal Godhead. This would indeed have been a most astounding event, which, if not impossible, is at least incredible in the absence of any clear and authoritative testimony to that effect, for which we shall certainly search the Word of God in vain.

Are we then to maintain this view of the Kenosis, that the Logos, while continuing, as one of the Persons of the Godhead, in full possession and exercise of all His divine powers, did nevertheless unite Himself to the human nature in such a way that in the God-man His divine attributes were for a season in abeyance? Omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient as the Ruler of the universe, in conjunction with the Father and the Spirit, did He forego the exercise of these perfections as Immanuel, God with us, until the period of humiliation was at an end? It may be said, as an objection to this view, that it is inconceivable that the same Being can under one aspect be present everywhere, possessed of infinite knowledge and almighty power, and under another aspect be confined to one spot at a time and limited in knowledge and in power. To this we answer that, whether inconceivable or not, this must be true of the exalted Saviour in regard to one of these divine perfections. As the second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God is omnipresent notwithstanding His incarnation, otherwise that Person of the

Godhead has for ever parted with one of His incommunicable and, therefore, most characteristic attributes. But in the man Christ Jesus, with whom He is indissolubly united, He is not omnipresent, but is now at the right hand of the Father, where He is to remain till He has put all His enemies under His feet, and whence He shall return to judge the world at the last day. We know how the Lutherans extricate themselves from this difficulty—by maintaining the doctrine of the ubiquity of the human nature of our Lord. But only to involve themselves in difficulties far more formidable. For, in the first place, ubiquity, or anywhereness, is not omnipresence or immensity. Even if we were to admit that the body of Jesus Christ could be in many places at the same time, that would not imply that He is always everywhere, filling all space with His presence. And if not, then the Logos, viewed as in union with the man Christ Jesus, is not omnipresent. But even the doctrine of ubiquity, as distinguished from omnipresence, besides affording no real relief, is in itself opposed to the plain statements of Scripture, and inconsistent with the essential nature of body as distinguished from spirit or soul.

The chief difficulty in connection with this view of the self-emptying of the Logos is not, however, in connection with His omnipresence or omnipotence, but His omniscience. Is it possible, it may be said, for a Being who knows all things to forego the exercise of that attribute? If, for example, the Logos, the Son,

knew perfectly when the Second Coming of Christ was to be, how could Jesus say, "But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father."¹ Omnipresence and omnipotence might conceivably be restrained in their exercise by one who had these powers, but could omniscience? Could a Being who knew all things by any possibility limit that knowledge, so that there should be some things which He did not know? This is a real difficulty, and we must face it. With this view let us retrace our steps a little, that we may see where we are.

The Eternal Word took the human nature into hypostatical union with His own person. In other words, the process was the incarnation of a Divine Person, not the deification of a man. In the incarnate Logos the person was divine, and the two natures remained distinct, each retaining its own peculiar properties, notwithstanding the close personal union. When that union took place the human nature of our Lord was in a state of feeble, helpless, unconscious infancy. Are we to suppose that Jesus Christ was then omniscient, omnipresent, and almighty in virtue of His possessing a nature to which these attributes belong, but that He refrained from revealing this because it would have been incongruous with the immaturity of His condition as a man? This is the view of Cyril of Alexandria. Thus he says, "A certain physical law does not permit man to have wisdom much

¹ Mark xiii. 32.

greater than corresponds to the stature of the body ; but somehow the understanding that is within us both runs along with and in a manner keeps pace with the growth of the body. The Word, therefore, became flesh, as it is written ; and was perfect, for He was the wisdom and power of the Father. But since it was somehow needful that He should conform to the custom of our nature, lest He should be thought to be something strange as a man to those who saw Him, while His body grew by little and little, He *concealed* Himself, and *appeared* wiser from day to day to those who saw and heard Him, being perfect indeed in all things, as has been already said, but following the common custom of our nature. When, therefore, you hear that He grew in wisdom and in grace, do not imagine that there was in Him any increase of wisdom, for the Word of God was wanting in nothing ; but because He was always wiser and more gracious in the esteem of those who saw Him, He is said to make progress ; so that His progress is to be referred rather to the habit of those who wondered at Him than to Himself " (Thesaurus, *Assert.* xxviii.).

We cannot, however, accept of this attempt to solve the problem, because it is really Dokeric doctrine. Admitting that the infant Jesus appeared to be as feeble and ignorant as other babes, it teaches us that, after all, this was only an appearance. In reality He was possessed of infinite knowledge and almighty power. If so, then this was a mere make-believe humiliation, very different from that emptying of Him-

self to which the Apostle Paul points as an example to us of wonderful self-sacrifice for the good of others.

In what, then, did this Kenosis, or self-emptying, of which the Apostle speaks, really consist? There are two conflicting interpretations of that passage in the Epistle to the Philippians where this word occurs, the one given in the Authorised and the other in the Revised English Version. Happily it does not matter, so far as our present subject is concerned, which interpretation is correct, whether the Apostle meant to say that the Son knew Himself to be entitled to equality with the Father, or that He did not eagerly insist upon His just rights. In either case, it is plain that He emptied Himself of this equality with God, and did so by putting off the form of God and putting on the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. We shall not get much further help from the study of these words than this, that in this Kenosis there was some correspondence between the putting off and the putting on. The form of God is in evident antithesis to the form of a servant, and yet we must not press this antithesis too far, otherwise we might be driven to the conclusion that the divine nature was laid aside when the human nature was assumed. All that this passage teaches is the fact that there was a real emptying of Himself on the part of the Logos when He became incarnate, and one which involved an act of self-sacrifice for the good of others, which is held up to us as an example to be followed. What the precise nature and effect of

this Kenosis were we must endeavour to ascertain from the narrative of the Evangelists, the statements of our Lord Himself, and the teaching of His Apostles.

The question we have now to consider is how we are to construe the language of the Apostle regarding this self-emptying of the Word when He became flesh, so as to make it harmonise with the clear teaching of Scripture in other places, as to the unity of Christ's person on the one hand, and the distinctness of His two natures on the other. Let us bear in mind then that in Jesus Christ the personality—the central thing—that which bound the two natures into one was divine, and that this divine nature was immeasurably the greater of the two. Now, when it pleased that Divine Person, the Logos, the Son of God, to assume the human nature into close and inseparable union with a view to our redemption, He knew that He had to make it really and not merely ostensibly His own. He had to take it with all its limitations, infirmities, and penalties, sin alone excepted. He had to stoop by a great act of condescension to our low condition, as the only way by which He might ultimately make us partners with Himself in His heavenly glory. Thus far all are practically agreed. It is indeed impossible for anyone to read the biography of our Lord in the four Gospels without being convinced of this. It is when we come to particulars that a divergence of view arises. Thus even Dr Orr, in his admirable treatise on the "Christian View of God and the World," seems to us to touch this subject too

lightly, and to make too little of the Kenosis of the Eternal Word. No doubt it is the extreme theory of Gess and Godet that he refers to, when he says that "it involves an impossibility, and will never permanently commend itself to the judgment of the Church." That is true, but what does Professor Orr propose to substitute in its stead? Nothing more than this: "The sense of the Apostle's words seems sufficiently met by the lowly form of Christ's earthly manifestation—'despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.'" Surely this is too meagre an account of the matter. We may gather from many things in Scripture that there was more in the Kenosis than this.

When the Son of God came into the world He appeared in fashion as a man. He was still the Eternal Word, by whom all things were made and are continually upheld; but as the divine factor in the God-man, Jesus Christ, He was pleased to lay aside for a time, not only His divine glory, but even the exercise of His divine and incommunicable perfections. As the Ruler of the universe, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He was almighty, omnipresent, and omniscient. As the Son of Man He was locally restricted to one place at a time; His knowledge was limited, and His power bounded. The proof of this is not far to seek. He was a Man, having a human body, in all respects like unto His brethren. His body, therefore, being a real one, and no mere phantasm, could no more be omnipresent than any of

our bodies can. We have His own authority for saying that He knew neither the day nor the hour of His Second Coming, and that single fact is sufficient to prove that during the period of the Kenosis He was not omniscient. By a sublime act of self-renunciation He suffered this divine nature to be limited as to the exercise of its powers through union to the finite nature of man. Just as the human soul is hindered in its flight by the gross material body in which it is encased, and through which alone it can at present act, so the Son of God in His hypostatical union with human nature consented to be fettered as to the exercise of His divine powers by being incarnated in a feeble earthly frame and united to a human soul of limited capacities. There may have been further voluntary restraint of power, but this at least so far accounts for the unquestionable phenomena of the humiliation.¹

It may be objected to this view, that Christ is repeatedly represented as reading men's hearts, which is a divine prerogative, and that He did many mighty

¹ Mr Gore, in his Bampton Lecture on the "Incarnation of the Son of God," puts the matter thus: "In a certain aspect indeed, the Incarnation is the folding round the Godhead of the veil of the humanity, to hide its glory, but it is much more than this. It is a ceasing to exercise certain natural prerogatives of the divine existence; it is a coming to exist for love of us under conditions of being not natural to the Son of God." "The personality is, then, throughout the same; but in regard to the divine attributes, what He retained in exercise and what He abandoned—whether He abandoned only the manifest glory, or also, for example, the exercise of the divine omniscience—we could hardly form any judgment *a priori*; but the record seems to assure us that our Lord in His mortal life was not habitually living in the exercise of omniscience" (pp. 158, 9).

works which no mere man could have done. Was not this the result of His possession of the divine nature, and does it not prove that the peculiar attributes of that nature were not wholly in abeyance? The answer is, that this superhuman knowledge may have been communicated to Christ by the Father, through the medium of the indwelling Spirit given to Him without measure, and that we have His own testimony to the fact that both the words which He spoke and the works which He did were not of Himself, but of the Father who sent Him. "Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing: for whatsoever things He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. . . . I can of Myself do nothing."¹ "Jesus therefore answered them, and said, My teaching is not Mine, but His that sent Me."² "Jesus therefore said, When ye have lifted up the Son of Man then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself, but as the Father taught Me, I speak these things."³ "For I spake not from Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He hath given Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."⁴ "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from Myself: but the Father abiding in Me doeth His works."⁵ Did not Christ in the case of His greatest miracle, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, publicly acknowledge before all the

¹ John v. 19, 30. ² vii. 16. ³ viii. 28. ⁴ xii. 49. ⁵ xiv. 10.

people that His power to perform it was from the Father, who always heard His prayer? When He was apprehended in the garden He said to the disciples—not that He could have rescued Himself in the exercise of His inherent divine power, but—that He could have prayed to His Father, and He would have presently given Him more than twelve legions of angels. And even in reference to the most astounding thing He ever did—His rising from the dead on the third day—while He says of His life “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again,” He adds, “This commandment received I from My Father.”¹

It may be said that in maintaining that the Eternal Word was at the same moment discharging all the functions of the Godhead along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and yet imprisoned, as it were, in Immanuel, we are holding a position which is self-contradictory and inconceivable. We answer that, inconceivable as this may be to our finite minds, it is necessarily

¹ Andrew Fuller, in his “Letters on Systematic Divinity,” brings out this point very clearly. “The sacred Scriptures often ascribe the miracles of Christ, His sustaining the load of His sufferings, and His resurrection from the dead, to the power of the Father, or of the Holy Spirit, rather than to His own Divinity. I have read in human writings, ‘But the Divinity within supported Him to bear.’ But I never met with such an idea in the sacred Scriptures. They represent the Father as *upholding* His servant, His elect, in whom His soul delighteth; and as sending His angel to strengthen Him in the conflict. While acting as the Father’s servant, there was a fitness in His being supported by Him, as well as His being in all things obedient to His will. But when the value, virtue, or efficacy of what He did and suffered are touched upon, they are never ascribed either to the Father, or to the Holy Spirit, but to Himself.”—Letter IX. On the Trinity.

involved in an incarnation which does not either on the one hand break up the unity of the Godhead, or on the other hand impart all the prerogatives of the Diving Being to an unconscious child. The view we maintain is manifestly implied in the statement of our Lord to which we have repeatedly referred, that even the Son did not know the day or the hour of His Second Coming. This can only mean that in His incarnate form He did not possess that knowledge. It will surely not be maintained that as the Eternal Word He did not know that day or hour; and we are arguing at present with those who admit that He continued to be the "Word with God," even when He appeared in fashion as a man. But as the Word, the second Person of the Godhead, there was nothing that He did not know. Least of all could the time of His own Second Coming into the world be hidden from Him, for it was a most important epoch in the evolution of that method of redemption which was devised by the triune God in the counsels of eternity.¹

¹ Professor Orr's remarks on the Kenotic Theory of Gess and Godet bear on this point, and are of great value. "Are we not told of the Son, in particular, not only that by Him all things were created, but that in Him all things consist—that He upholdeth all things by the word of His power? Is this relation to the universe not an essential one? . . . I might appeal here to the analogy of nature. There is an immanent presence of God in nature, but there is also a transcendent existence of God beyond nature. So the Divine Son took upon Him our nature with its human limits, but above and beyond that, if we may so express it, was the vast 'over-soul' of His Divine consciousness. Even human psychology, in making us more familiar than we were with the idea of different strata of consciousness even in the same personal being, gives us a hint which need not be lost."—"The Christian View of God and the World," p. 281.

If it be still contended that to suppose that the Logos was at one and the same moment ruling the universe with the Father and the Spirit, and yet restricted as to the exercise of His powers in Jesus Christ, is really to invest the second Person of the Godhead with a twofold personality, and is therefore an idea that cannot be entertained, we answer by asking the question : Was the Word, when He became flesh, omnipresent, or was He not ? Certainly Jesus Christ was not omnipresent. He did not fill all space. He could not even be in Galilee and Judea at the same time. If, therefore, during our Lord's life on earth the Logos was omnipresent, we have the very duality complained of. He was omnipresent in His immanent, eternal, and unchangeable relation to the Father and the Spirit. Yet He was not omnipresent in His new-formed relation to Jesus Christ. If, on the other hand, He was not omnipresent when He assumed the human nature into personal subsistence with Himself, He has lost that attribute for ever ; for the human nature of Jesus Christ, with which His personality is bound up, is no more omnipresent now than in the days of His humiliation here on earth.

Should any be disposed to say that to them the difficulty of attributing what looks like a twofold personality to the Logos is so great that they would rather hold that the divine nature in Christ underwent no limitation, and that whatever of this sort is affirmed in Scripture must be understood of His human nature, our answer is : This is not merely to ignore but to deny

the Kenosis altogether. That self-emptying must mean something; and it is not of the human but of the divine in Christ that it is asserted. The assumption of a second nature, if it involved no limitation of the first, could not reasonably be called self-emptying. If it be urged that this Kenosis may simply mean the veiling of His glory on the part of the Eternal Son, not the restriction of the exercise of any of His powers, our answer is: This view is inconsistent with the words of Christ already quoted—"of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." It would be a bold thing to say that by the words "neither the Son" He means His human nature. If that had been His meaning, He would probably have said "the Son of Man." At all events, Father and Son are correlative terms, so that when He says "*the Son*," in immediate connection with "*the Father*," He must mean by the former the Logos, the Eternal Son, even as He unquestionably means by the latter the Everlasting Father. And so this proposal to regard all such limitations as referring only to the human nature obviously breaks down.

Once more, it may be said in opposition to this view, that it practically supersedes the divine nature of the Saviour, and leaves Him simply in possession of a pure and spotless human soul, capable of being enlightened and invigorated by the power of the Holy Ghost. For of what use was the possession of a divine nature to Christ, if its powers were for the time wholly in abeyance? To this we would answer: *first*, that the

divine nature gave infinite meritorious value to his obedience and sufferings, and thus made them, though limited in their intensity and duration, an adequate ground for the forgiveness and justification of the whole Church of God ; *second*, the value and indispensableness of the divine nature of Christ are very evident, now that the period of His humiliation is ended, and the powers and prerogatives of Godhead are all exercised by the glorified Son of Man. Having reconciled us to God by His death, He now saves us by His life. That life, if it is to have saving power sufficient to expel sin from all His members and bring them up to the standard of perfect holiness, must be divine. And, *third*, though Jesus was dependent for His superhuman knowledge and His wonder-working power upon the will of the Father and the work of the Spirit, yet we are to remember that there is always a concurrence and co-operation of all the Persons of the Godhead. "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." So that when the Father imparted knowledge or power to Jesus in the days of His flesh (and we know that He grew in wisdom and in stature) He did it by the Son and through the Spirit, for this is the divine order of operation in the Three-One God. In other words, there was a certain communication of divine powers from the Logos to the human nature of Jesus Christ, with which He was in hypostatical union, but it was sovereign and occasional, not necessary and constant.¹

¹ This is clearly implied in Christ's attitude of dependence during His whole earthly life. See passages of Scripture quoted above, page 33.

If it be objected that this is neither more nor less than Nestorianism, dividing the Person of Christ into two, the one imparting powers to the other, we answer: No. There would be good ground for this assertion if we represented the communication as reciprocal, the human imparting its properties to the divine, as well as the divine to the human. But when we bear in mind that the personality in Christ Jesus is the Logos, it implies no Nestorianism to say that that Person may give divine powers to the human nature, or withhold them at His will. But indeed the difficulty arises from the very fact of the hypostatical union of two natures in one person. This is something quite unique, and to our minds quite inconceivable, though we may receive it in simple faith upon divine authority, and see how it opens up for us a possibility of redemption. But, in dealing with so great a mystery, it is impossible for us so to adjust matters as to escape all difficulties on the right hand and the left. If we hold that the divine nature in Christ communicates nothing to the human, then we are accused of practically leaving Him with only one nature, which is the heresy of the Monophysites. If, on the other hand, we hold that the divine nature does communicate certain powers to the human, we are charged with dividing Christ into two persons, which is the heresy of the Nestorians. This, however, as we have said, is not a fair charge; for we hold that the person of Christ is one, the Logos, who in the fulness of the time assumed human nature. It is perfectly consistent

with this to maintain that, while that Divine Person for the most part restrained the exercise of His peculiar powers during the time of our Lord's humiliation, He might, when occasion required, at the bidding of the Father, and through the ministry of the Spirit, impart certain energies to the human nature which it did not ordinarily possess. We believe that this view of the matter, notwithstanding the difficulties with which, in common with every theory of the Kenosis, it is encompassed, is the one which best harmonises the statements of Holy Scripture.¹

¹ We have carefully avoided saying anything about the *consciousness* of our Lord in regard to this deep mystery. Such questions as these—How or when did He become aware of His own Divinity? How far was His inner experience that of a god or of a man?—are matters of pure speculation, and on a subject such as this it is safe to keep within the limits of the written Word. We prefer to follow the wise and modest reserve of Principal Rainy, when he says, in a criticism of Gore's "Incarnation of the Son of God":—"We will venture to put this question—There is evidence enough that our Lord's human speech and action proceeded from One who was never less or other than the Eternal Son of God. But is there any evidence that His human speech and action proceeded from any *immediate principle* other than a human consciousness—that is, from human faculties or capacities; this human nature, in the fulness of the Spirit, being participant of all knowledge of His own and His Father's being that befitted His person and work, yet participant always in a manner proper to human nature? Was not this the condescension of the Son of God, to live and act so? Meanwhile, that this Divine nature was fitly concerned in the whole manifestation is the very substance of our faith. But are we qualified or called to say how?

"For example, if Mr Gore speaks of the Son of God 'receiving the consciousness of His own and His Father's being,' may we not as fitly say, that the human soul, replenished by the Spirit, was participant of the consciousness of His own and His Father's being? But when we say so, we speak of the arising of a *human* consciousness, under the conditions of human thought and feeling. And it may be we ought to think of this not as inherently possessed in virtue of the Incarnation, but as imparted."—*The Critical Review*, Vol. II. p. 120.

It only remains for us to add a few sentences on the practical question which has brought the doctrine of the Kenosis into notice in this country, "Are we to regard the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, reported in the gospels, as authoritatively decisive on such questions as the inspiration, the authorship, and the structure of the Old Testament?" To illustrate what we mean. It has been argued that when our Lord said to the Jews, in reference to the expression used in one of the Psalms, "I said, ye are gods," "the Scripture cannot be broken," His words imply that even down to the most minute and apparently unimportant points the Old Testament is divinely inspired. Again, it has been argued that His references to Moses are such as to show that He believed him to be the author of the Pentateuch, and that, speaking generally, the whole drift of His allusions to Old Testament history indicates that He accepted it in the sense in which it has been traditionally received, and not in that of the modern critical school. These arguments have been met, partly by denying that our Lord's statements are to be understood in the sense thus put upon them, and partly by maintaining that, even if they are, they cannot be held as foreclosing all critical inquiry. It is only with the latter of these positions that we have at present anything to do—viz., that we are not to regard these questions as settled by the statements of our Lord. Two reasons are given for this—*first*, that these were mere *obiter dicta*, and that it is not fair to regard them as decisive

of questions not then present to His mind, questions which He probably thought so comparatively unimportant that it was not worth His while to disturb the prevailing belief regarding them; and, *second*, that our Lord Himself disclaimed omniscience in the days of His flesh, and that on such points as these, not essential to the work He had to do, His knowledge may have been limited and imperfect. It is with this last assertion alone that we are here concerned.

If the view we have taken of the self-emptying of the Logos be correct, we must admit that it is precarious to appeal to the authority of Jesus Christ as if He were omniscient. For we believe that to a large extent the Logos did not exercise His divine powers during His life on earth, and that only occasionally, at the instance of the Father and through the medium of the indwelling Spirit, did He communicate supernatural knowledge to the human soul, to be uttered by the human lips of the Son of Man. But let it be remembered that the precariousness of an appeal to Christ, as if He knew all things, does not depend upon our theory, but upon His own words: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father." That word is decisive against the supposition that Christ was omniscient in the days of His flesh. The devout believer may feel himself safe in regarding every word He spoke as absolutely correct, but he cannot, in the face of that statement made by our Lord Himself, insist on others accepting His

every utterance *on the ground that He knew all things*. But even when we make this admission, which in candour we are compelled to do, there is still ground for maintaining that all the recorded utterances of Christ, when we have ascertained their precise meaning, are to be received as infallibly true. He was the great Prophet of the Church like unto Moses, but greater far than he, into whose mouth God was to put His words, and to whom all were to hearken at their peril.¹ "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son." "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." And on the Mount of Transfiguration there came a voice from the excellent glory, saying, "This is My beloved Son, hear Him."² Granting that the Son of God condescended, not merely to veil His glory, but to forego the exercise of His divine prerogatives for a time, granting that the man Christ Jesus did not know all things, yet being the commissioned servant of the Father, anointed with the Spirit without measure, He must have had all the knowledge needed for the words He had to speak, as He certainly had all the power requisite for the works He had to do. As He never failed in any miracle which He undertook to perform, so we may be sure He never erred in any word which He opened His mouth to speak. If even the humblest and least conspicuous of the Prophets could say, "Thus saith the

¹ Deut. xviii. 18, 19.² Luke ix. 35.

Lord," and claim for their utterances an implicit faith, how much more might He, who was not merely a servant but a Son, who always did the things that pleased His Father, never yielding to temptation or uttering an unguarded word, and who could say at the close of His earthly ministry, "I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which sent Me; He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."¹ While we may not hold that the sphere of His knowledge was unbounded, yet within that sphere everything that He said must have been the very truth of God.

The sum and substance, then, of what we have to say on this subject is this: An appeal to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ on questions of Old Testament Criticism is competent, but it should be cautiously and reverently taken. There is a rash and random way of doing it that has not unfairly been compared to the conduct of the Israelites in bringing the Ark into the battle-field. When we adduce the testimony of the Lord Jesus in support of a particular view of the structure, the authorship, or the inspiration of any part of the Old Testament, we should first consider carefully whether His words really bear the interpretation we have put upon them, and whether, even if that be so, without supposing that Christ accommodated Himself to the prejudices of His times, it may not be true that He used the language current in His day, where no important interest was at stake. That

¹ John xii. 49.

language may not have been strictly accurate, and yet He may have deemed it better to employ it than to correct every error however trifling, thus raising a number of side issues, which would have turned men's attention from the great questions on which He desired to fix their thoughts. If, after weighing these things deliberately, we still believe that Jesus uttered words which imply, and were meant to imply, a judgment on any critical question, then we are entitled to appeal to His authority as decisive. Only let us see that our appeal is not based on any assumed omniscience of our blessed Lord in the days of His flesh, for that were to make no account of His own disclaimer, or of the Pauline doctrine of the Kenosis of the Eternal Word. Rather let us base it on the fact that even in the time of His humiliation our Lord was the great Prophet of the Church, anointed in unmeasured fulness with the Holy Ghost, so that, as every act He did was right, every word He spoke was true.¹

¹ See note on Dr Dale's views at the end of this volume.

II.

THE EVANGELICAL VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED.

IT is a very common objection to the current evangelical doctrine regarding the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, that we find little or nothing of it in our Lord's own teaching, as that has been handed down to us in the four gospels. Suppose we admit that this is true—though the silence of the gospels on this great theme is not by any means so absolute as some maintain that it is—there is nothing in this circumstance which our Lord Himself did not lead us to expect. In His parting address to His disciples, delivered on the eve of the betrayal, He distinctly told them, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”¹ Is it not reasonable to suppose that the great purpose of His death was one of these things? If He found it so hard to get them to believe the fact that He was to be taken from them by a violent death, is it not obvious that, until that death had actually taken place, there would be no receptivity in their minds

¹ John xvi. 12.

for the doctrines which gather round that death and help us to understand it? How natural that He should wait until the event had taken place before attempting to explain it! And so we find Him, after He had risen from the dead, opening up to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus those statements in the Scriptures which they had never previously understood, but which in the light of what had just happened they now saw to mean that "the Christ ought to suffer these things and to enter into His glory."¹ The same evangelist, Luke, tells us that He afterwards said to all His disciples, "These are the words that I spake unto you while I was yet with you"—He had not then been so silent as some suppose—"that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."²

But even these explanations of the divine necessity for His death, and the gracious purpose it was to serve, were only preliminary to a far fuller revelation which they were to receive after the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. For it is to this fuller revelation, and not to His own personal teaching after His resurrection, that He refers

¹ Luke xxiv. 26.

² Luke xxiv. 44-46.

them on the night of the betrayal. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."¹ This promise doubtless was fulfilled. And as some of those who received this fuller revelation were led by the Holy Spirit to record it for the benefit of the Church in future ages, we have in the Apostolical Epistles that further information which our Lord led His disciples to expect. How foolish then, and how reprehensible, is the conduct of those who try to exalt the teaching of Christ by contrasting it with that of the Apostles! The latter is as much the teaching of Christ as the former, for they speak to us as the organs of the Holy Ghost, and He receives from Christ what He thus shews to us.

Another thing that the words of our Lord recorded in one of the gospels lead us to expect is, that the doctrine of the Atonement will not be easily apprehended, that the reason of man will be disposed to cavil at it, and that it must be accepted as a doctrine of revelation on divine authority. This comes out incidentally in the course of that memorable conversation between our Lord and Nicodemus, which we find in the third chapter of John's Gospel. That ruler of the Jews had come to Him for instruction, recognising Him as a teacher come from God, and anxious to ascertain what new views of truth He had to com-

¹ John xvi. 12-14.

municate. To his utter astonishment, he is told that it is not instruction that he needs in the first instance, but regeneration. Nicodemus raises a difficulty, which our Lord at once explains. Still he is not satisfied, and says, with evident impatience and disappointment, "How can these things be?" Our Lord gives no further explanation, but upbraids him for his ignorance of a truth which had been clearly revealed in their own Scriptures, and virtually tells him that, unless he is prepared to accept on His authority this doctrine of the necessity for a new birth, He will proceed no further. And for this good reason—"If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?"¹ The earthly thing which Nicodemus was unwilling to believe was the necessity for the new birth—a change that transpires on earth, and may be tested by experience and observation. What were the heavenly things which he would find it still more difficult to believe? Evidently they were those truths which Jesus immediately proceeds to unfold to this ruler of the Jews, perhaps more plainly than He had ever done to anyone before. For it is to be noted that Nicodemus makes no more objections. Jesus sees from his very look that he is listening with rapt attention and reverent submission. And therefore He proceeds, as He would not otherwise have done, to speak of the "heavenly things," the Incarnation and the Atonement, of which this convinced and humbled sinner now feels his urgent need. "No

¹ John iii. 12.

man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”¹ We need not therefore be surprised that men should feel difficulties and raise doubts regarding the Atonement, though we should endeavour to meet these doubts and difficulties in a calm and candid spirit, and be careful not to provoke or aggravate them by rash and unguarded statements.

The objections to the ordinary view of the Atonement are chiefly these: that guilt and righteousness are personal properties, not capable of being transferred by imputation from one to another; that even if such a transference were possible, so far from being an honour done to divine law and justice, it would be an outrage to both to punish the innocent for the guilty; and that it does not relieve this difficulty, but rather increases it, to urge that this is done by the great Judge of all, and that the sufferer is His own dear Son, who willingly submitted to the infliction.

Now, these objections all proceed on the assumption that such an arrangement as is objected to would be quite arbitrary and unprecedented, a mere device to keep up an appearance of justice—to pay a sort of homage to the law, when in reality its sanctions were being set aside in the interests of mercy. But to this

¹ John iii. 13-15.

view of the matter we demur. We grant that, if the plan of dealing with men in the person of a representative had been introduced for the first time into the divine economy after the fall of man, it might with some show of reason have been objected that this was a mere fetch—an evasion of the law rather than a satisfaction of its claims. And we grant that if there were no closer connection between Christ and those for whom He died than the possession of a common human nature, there might be some force in the strong protests against the utter injustice of His suffering the penalty of our sins. But the parallel drawn by Paul between the first and second Adam shews that neither of these positions can be maintained, and further throws important light upon Christ's redeeming work.

First, then, it is clear that certain transactions passed between the first man and his Creator, which practically issued in all his posterity being involved in sin, suffering, and death. This is abundantly plain from the narrative of the Fall in the Book of Genesis, and will hardly be denied even by those who are least disposed to take a literal view of what is there related. And the impression produced by that narrative is confirmed by the words of the Apostle Paul in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans—we quote from the Revised Version, as being a more literal translation: "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin." "By the trespass of one many died." "The judgment came of one unto condemnation." "By the trespass of the one the judgment

came unto all men to condemnation." "Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners." This language is abundantly explicit. The apostle seems to multiply and vary his expressions in order that there may be no possible doubt about his meaning. First, he tells us that sin and death entered into the world through one man. Then, more particularly, that the many died by the trespass of the one. Then, as if to show that this death was judicial, and not merely the result of some natural law or process, he adds—"The judgment came of one unto condemnation." And finally, he puts it still more plainly—"By the one man's disobedience the many were made (or constituted) sinners." Now, throughout this whole passage sin is regarded rather in its forensic than its moral aspect, as involving just liability to penal consequences. This is very clearly brought out in the parenthetical statement thrown in after the twelfth verse. In that verse the apostle had said: "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." Here he feels that some explanation is required. For, in the first clause of that twelfth verse, the prevalence of death is traced to one man's sin, while in the close of the same verse it seems to be ascribed to the fact that all have sinned. How are these statements to be reconciled? The apostle goes on to show that here there is no inconsistency, for he immediately explains that when he says "all sinned," he refers, not to their

own personal transgressions, but to their being somehow implicated in the one fatal sin. "For," he says, "until the law (*i.e.* prior to its publication) sin was in the world." But how, it may be asked, could that be, for it is a self-evident truth that "sin is not imputed when there is no law"? His answer to this objection is the simple re-assertion of the fact that, explain it as we may, sin was in the world during the period that elapsed between Adam and Moses, for death, the penalty of sin, was there, not as an occasional or incidental calamity, but as a king of terrors, reigning over the entire human race. Nor is this to be accounted for by the universal transgression of the law of nature, for death reigned even over infants, who were incapable of sinning after the likeness of Adam's transgression, that is, by a personal, voluntary act. Here, then, we find the apostle not only affirming that somehow sin and condemnation came upon all men by one transgression of their first parent; he goes further, and states that all men sinned, carefully including in this statement those who were incapable of actual, personal transgression. What possible explanation of his words can there be but this, that there is such a connection between Adam and his posterity that it may be truly said, in reference at least to his "one offence," that they sinned in him?

But there are some who say that while they willingly receive the positive teaching of the Apostle Paul on the subject of redemption, at least in its great leading outlines, as inspired and authoritative, they are not

prepared to accept as infallible his interpretation of Old Testament Scripture. On the contrary, they maintain that it is just here that the influence of his early rabbinical training often betrays itself. In proof of this they point to the quaint and fanciful way in which he allegorises the story of Sarah and Hagar in his Epistle to the Galatians. It would lead us too far away from our present purpose to enter on an exegesis of that passage, or to attempt to show that the apostle's treatment of it is not so far-fetched and arbitrary as might at first appear.¹ It is enough to say that there is no true parallel between the allegorising of that incident in the life of Abraham and the explanation here given of our fall in Adam as throwing light upon our redemption by Jesus Christ. The one is a mere passing illustration, thrown in by the way, introduced as a preacher might employ a more or less appropriate anecdote in a popular discourse, not to prove what he was saying, but to make it more vivid to the apprehension of his hearers. The argument in the Epistle to the Galatians is quite independent of this curious allegory, and would lose none of its cogency, if the reference to the true wife and the bondmaid were left out. This cannot be said of the passage in the Epistle to the Romans, which we are now considering. It lies embedded in the very heart of this the most doctrinal and closely-reasoned of all the Pauline writings. It is an essential part

¹ For an exposition of the apostle's argument, and an explanation of the allegory, see Paper V., page 200.

of Paul's teaching with regard to the method of our redemption. It is designed to show how that was accomplished by a new and gracious application of the very principles which, in the case of our first parents, had issued in the ruin of the human race. It is the most important contribution in all the Epistle to the proof of the great thesis laid down in the third chapter, that God set forth Christ to be a propitiation to shew His righteousness—that He might Himself be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus. You cannot, therefore, tear out this passage, with its elaborate exposition of Adam as the figure of Him that was to come, without seriously mutilating the argument of the apostle in connection with one of the most cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.

Assuming, then, that the teaching of the apostle in this place is inspired and authoritative, and that we have correctly represented him as affirming that there is such a connection between Adam and his posterity that it may be truly said in reference to his "one offence" that they sinned in him, the question remains: Have we any means of ascertaining the nature of this connection? Does it arise from the peculiar constitution of our race, sprung as it is from a single pair, and thus made of one blood? Is it the solidarity implied in the common descent of all mankind from Adam that has involved us in the criminality of his departure from God and goodness? Doubtless this has much to do with the matter, and may be regarded as the physical basis that underlies the fact so clearly

taught by the Apostle Paul. The doctrine of heredity, that plays so important a part in modern science, lends no little confirmation to the Scriptural teaching as to the far-reaching consequences of our first parent's sin. But, viewed by itself, this vital unity pervading the race is not an adequate ground for the responsibility for our first parent's sin, with which we are so distinctly charged. It is not merely said that certain calamities have come upon us through his sin, but that "the *judgment* came of one unto *condemnation*." But judgment and condemnation are legal things, that cannot justly overtake us on account of any mere natural tie between us and the founder of the human family. If we are held to have sinned in Adam and inherited judicial condemnation because we are descended from him, on the same principle we must be held responsible for the sins of our immediate parents, our physical connection with them being even closer and more direct than that which subsists between us and an ancestor so remote as the first father of the human race. Besides, if this responsibility were based upon our being the children of Adam by natural generation, we should be held guilty of all the sins he ever committed, whereas the apostle is careful to restrict our accountability to the "one offence." The mere fact of paternity, therefore, does not involve the children in their father's sins. What then was there in our relation to Adam over and above this to warrant the strong statements of the apostle about our being made sinners by his one offence? Evidently

it was some express act of God constituting him, who was already our natural head, our covenant head, or representative in law. If any one objects to the word "covenant" we do not press it, though both the word and the conception are thoroughly Scriptural. All that we contend for is, that it pleased God, after having laid an adequate basis for it in the constitution of the human race, to put that race under trial in the person of its natural head. Adam was laid under positive law, to which an express penalty and an implied promise were attached—death in the event of transgression, and life in the event of obedience. The result of that trial was, as we have only too good cause to know, that when exposed to temptation he fell before it, incurred the penalty, forfeited the reward. Mankind was tried, and failed in the person of its divinely-appointed representative. We admit, nay, we strenuously maintain, his natural fitness as head of the race to hold this position, but we also maintain that it needed an express divine arrangement to constitute him our legal representative, so that it could be truly said that we had sinned in his transgression.

Now, consider the bearing of all this on the work of Christ, who is expressly spoken of as "the second man," and whose relation to the first Adam is briefly indicated by the apostle when he speaks of our first parent as "the figure of Him that was to come." In the first place, then, it cannot be fairly urged as an objection to the appointment of Christ as the surety

and substitute of sinful men, that this was a mere evasion of the claims of law and justice, being the introduction of a new and unheard-of principle into the divine government of the world. On the hypothesis that we have correctly stated the relation between Adam and his posterity, and the manner in which man fell, it needed no new principle to accomplish our redemption, but only a new application of the old principle, which had been followed by such disastrous consequences when first applied. The method of dealing with men in the person of a representative, intrusting the fortunes of the race to one conspicuous member of it, divinely appointed to act for all the rest, holding them as so far identified that the many shared the guilt or merit of the conduct of the one—this was not first put into operation in the case of Jesus of Nazareth, but in the case of Adam at least four thousand years before. This seems to us a conclusive answer to the objection that the appointment of a substitute to redeem lost men was a mere pretence of homage to the law ; that, in short, it would have been better to pardon sin without requiring any satisfaction to justice, than to gloss over the difficulty by appointing a method of satisfaction so utterly delusive.

But a second and more formidable objection is, that it would have been a mere travesty of justice, and not a homage to its claims, to punish the innocent instead of the guilty ; that such a procedure is repugnant to the best feelings of our nature ; and that it does not mend the matter to be told that the substitution was

made by the authority of God, and with the sufferer's own consent. There would be great force in this objection, if the substitute and those for whom he suffered were in every sense distinct and independent parties, related only by the arbitrary appointment of the one to represent the other. To revert to the case of Adam: do we not feel that, whatever difficulties surround the subject of our being involved in the responsibilities of his first transgression, these difficulties would have been much greater if he had been a being of a different nature, or if he had been any other than the father and founder of the race? The unity of the human family did not of itself imply that all its members were responsible for the actions of its natural head, otherwise we should underlie the guilt, not merely of Adam's "one offence," but of all his subsequent transgressions. Still, that unity was an important element in the matter, being the physical basis on which the Creator might, if He so pleased, deal with men, not only as individuals having each a separate responsibility of his own, but also as a race, putting their loyalty to the test in the person of their natural head. Now, we believe that the relation of Christ to His people is, in this respect, perfectly analogous to that of Adam and his posterity. In both cases there is, along with a distinct individual personality, a corporate unity—a joint responsibility centring in the head. Thus, while in one respect Christ is distinct and separate from His people, and thus may be spoken of as their Substitute and Saviour,

their Intercessor and Surety, in another sense He is so identified with them that they constitute together one Church, of which He is the foundation, one body, of which He is the head.

The fact that there is such a union, nay, identification, of Christ and His people, will scarcely be denied. It is implied in His own words to the disciples in the upper chamber at the close of the Paschal Supper,¹ "I am the vine, ye are the branches." And it is taught with special clearness by the Apostle Paul, when he speaks of the Church as a body of which Christ is the living head—a figure which he often uses, and which he has worked out in the twelfth chapter of 1st Corinthians with a great fulness of elaborate detail. It may be said, however, that this identification takes place only piece-meal from age to age, as one and another of the children of men are united to Christ by faith. When Christ died upon the Cross He was not the actual Head of His body the Church, the greater number of its members being yet unborn. How, then, could He be their legal representative? How could His death avail as an atonement for their sins? To this we may answer, Was not the Church almost as incomplete when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians, and yet he speaks there of God having made Christ² "*Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all?*" If the human race was tried and fell in Adam, though all his posterity were yet in his loins,

¹ John xv. 5.

² Eph. i. 22, 23.

and only enter on their sad inheritance of sin and sorrow as they are born one by one into the world, why might not the people of Christ be redeemed by His death on Calvary, though they only come to partake of that redemption as one by one they are born again? In both cases we must go back to the time when the federal or representative arrangement was made. In the case of Adam and his seed it was when the Lord God said unto him, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In the case of Christ and His seed it was from all eternity. Thus the apostle, blessing God for the spiritual blessings bestowed upon the Ephesian believers, traces them up to the fact that God had chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world, that He had predestinated them to the adoption of children by Christ Jesus to Himself.¹ Does not this mean that He chose them to be His people, predestinated them to be His children, through union to Jesus Christ? That union, therefore, which qualified Him to be their representative was virtually formed before the foundation of the world. The Son of God was then designated to the work of our redemption, and to the task thus assigned Him was added the promise of eternal life for His people, if the task were perfectly fulfilled, and the threatening of eternal death to them if His work should prove a failure. One difference is to be noted between the case of the first Adam and the second, corresponding to the difference of the actual issue in the two cases.

¹ Eph. i. 3, 5.

To the first Adam the penalty was expressed and the promise only implied. To the second Adam the promise was expressed. It was the penalty that was implied.

If proof be demanded of the fact that a promise was made to the Son of eternal life to His people as the reward of the successful accomplishment of His work, we would point to these words of Paul in the beginning of his Epistle to Titus, "In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal."¹ The apostle is here speaking of his own personal hope of eternal life, and he grounds it on a promise made by God before times eternal. To whom was that promise made? Not to Paul himself, for he was then unborn, and a promise cannot be made to one who is as yet non-existent. It must therefore have been made to some one on his behalf. To whom else could it have been made but to the Eternal Son, in whom He was chosen before the foundation of the world, by whom he was to be redeemed, and made a chosen vessel for service, a monument of grace? Perhaps, however, it may be said that we are laying undue emphasis upon the word "promised"—that it is here used in a more loose and general way, to signify that God had *purposed* before eternal ages to give eternal life to one who should afterwards be born at Tarsus, and named by his parents Saul. No, we reply, that cannot be the meaning of these words. A promise is one thing—a purpose is another. A man

¹ Titus i. 2.

may form a purpose, and afterwards see fit to change it, without laying himself open to the imputation of falsehood. But if a man gives a promise, and does not keep it, he has broken his word. To put it bluntly, he has lied. And it is the impossibility of God's lying, not His incapacity to change His purpose, that Paul relies on as the immovable foundation of his hope of eternal life. Therefore, we repeat, the apostle, speaking on a subject that was to him of the most momentous interest, in reference to which he would say nothing lightly, solemnly declares that all his hope was built upon a promise made by God before eternal ages—a promise which must have been made not to Himself personally, but to the Eternal Son on his behalf.

Now, if any one should say, "How can it be any satisfaction to divine justice that our sins should be punished in the person of an innocent substitute, to whom, by a sort of legal fiction, our guilt has been previously imputed?" the answer is, You are entirely misrepresenting the case. You are not taking into view all the elements of the problem. Long before we were born, in the depths of a past eternity, God, foreseeing our fall, laid the burden of our redemption on His own well-beloved Son. He made to Him a promise of eternal life for each and all of His believing people, upon condition of His accomplishing to the satisfaction of the Father the work given Him to do. Is not this implied in the words of Jesus, when He said to His Father, "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son

also may glorify Thee. As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him?"¹ What is this but reminding the Father of His ancient promise? And then He proceeds to say that the conditions on His part have been at least virtually fulfilled, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."² For the work which the Father laid upon Him, the Son most willingly undertook, saying, "Lo, I come, I delight to do Thy will, yea, Thy law is within My heart."³ So, then, we are to bear in mind that He who died for us first of all generously identified Himself with us in the closest possible way; not merely by assuming human nature, but by undertaking to be the Head of His body, the Church, as thoroughly one with them in interest and responsibility as Adam was one with the human family of which he was the head and representative. Entering into such a relation of vital union and virtual identification with His people, Christ accepted obligations on their behalf, just as Adam did for his constituency, for this was the immediate purpose for which He became their head. Only that there was this important difference between the two cases, which the apostle in his parallel is careful to emphasise, that a heavier weight of responsibility and a more arduous work fell upon the second Adam than upon the first. For He had not merely to *act* as representative on behalf of the members of His body,

¹ John xvii. 1. ² John xvii. 4. ³ Ps. xl. 6-8, and Heb. x. 5-9.

the Church, but, inasmuch as He found them under the law's curse, He had to *suffer* for them too. For God, having resolved to redeem a people chosen out of the lost family of man, was pleased to gather them up into a corporate unity, of which His own Son in human nature should be the Head. Thus He entered as naturally and as justly into obligations on behalf of His people as Adam did on behalf of his posterity, there being in both cases not merely the divine appointment of a representative, but a pre-established solidarity as a basis for the representative system to rest on.

It may perhaps be objected to the view of the relation between Christ and His people which we have been endeavouring to present—that it is equivocal and ambiguous. At one time we speak of the Saviour as distinct from the redeemed, He on the one hand, and each of them on the other, having his own personal identity perfectly distinct and separate. In this connection we speak of His having died as their substitute and surety. But when it is argued that such a death of the innocent in the room of the guilty, so far from being a satisfaction to justice, is a violation of its fundamental principles, we hasten to say that this death was suffered, not by another in our room, but virtually by ourselves in the person of our representative and head. But is there not something like jugglery in this? Ought we not to make our choice between these two relationships—the Substitute, or the Head

—instead of trying to construct a theory of the Atonement by the help of both, taking our stand on the one in our popular teaching, and retreating to the other when put upon our defence? This is ingenious and plausible, but it has no real weight. For these two views of our relation to Jesus Christ are clearly brought out in the Scriptures, so that we are not entitled to set either of them aside. Sometimes the perfect distinctness of Christ and His people is accentuated, and then He is said to have given His life as a ransom for many,¹ to have died for us,² to have suffered, the just for the unjust,³ language which plainly implies vicarious suffering, a substitutionary death. At other times the union between Him and His people is as clearly emphasised, as when we read, “And He is head of the body, the Church,”⁴ “the last Adam,” in whom “all shall be made alive,”⁵ “I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live.”⁶ “If we died with Christ we believe that we shall also live with Him.”⁷ Without attempting to expound these statements in detail, we may safely say that the general idea they convey is that of a union between Christ and His people, both in His death and in His subsequent resurrection-life. And, therefore, we are warranted, on the ground of these representations, in saying that, in considering the question of the death of Christ as a satisfaction to divine justice, we are

¹ Mark x. 45. ² 1 Thess. v. 10. ³ 1 Peter iii. 18. ⁴ Col. i. 18.

⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 22, 45.

⁶ Gal. ii. 20.

⁷ Rom. vi. 8.

entitled to take into account the light thrown upon the subject by either of these views, however difficult we may find it to harmonise them. The one may be called the historical view of the Atonement. It is the simpler and more obvious of the two, the one most easily conveyed to the popular understanding. It is, therefore, very properly the staple of evangelical preaching, when that refers to the death of Christ; and it is accepted by the great majority of Christians without doubt or difficulty. The other may be called the mystical view of the Atonement, not so readily grasped, nor so easily expounded. It is, therefore, less adapted for ordinary homiletic treatment, but it goes deeper than the other view. It takes us to the root of the relation between Christ and His people, and so to the very heart of the Atonement. Most men greatly prefer the concrete to the abstract, the individual to the generic. They are quite content with the simpler and more popular, yet thoroughly Scriptural, representation of Christ as our substitute suffering in our room. They raise no difficulties—they ask no questions. But those who are dissatisfied with this view, on account of the moral difficulties by which it is beset, will probably be intelligent enough to apprehend the correlated and complementary view which represents Christ and His people as virtually one. He who was under one aspect a person apart from us, “separate from sinners,” and who in that capacity died as a substitute in our room, is under

another aspect our representative or head, so united to us that together we form but one body, and in that capacity His death was virtually—in a mystical and legal sense—our own. We are perfectly entitled to take advantage of the simpler view for the purpose of making perfectly plain to the humblest capacity what it so deeply concerns every sinner to understand; while we are equally entitled to avail ourselves of the light which the more abstruse view throws upon the real and inward union between Christ and His people, in order to remove the objections which the more superficial view suggests to many thoughtful minds.

It may be said, however, that when we retire from the ground of substitution to that of headship, in order to escape the assaults made upon that position, we only expose ourselves to a flank fire of a still more formidable nature. For, putting aside for the moment the difficulties connected with the innocent suffering in the room of the guilty, it is admitted that the doctrine of substitution does very clearly explain our deliverance from death through the death of Jesus Christ. The substitute having paid the full penalty, it is nothing but simple justice that those whom He represented should go free. But if, to escape the difficulties with which vicarious punishment is attended, we fall back upon the doctrine of headship, then we must take that doctrine with all the consequences which it involves. If Christ, instead of being regarded as one apart from us, who generously took

our place and our punishment, is to be viewed as one who was pleased to unite Himself to His people in such a way that in the view of the law they constituted but one personality, why should not they, as well as He, suffer the penalty of sin? If the case be parallel to that of Adam and his posterity, we know that he and his seed were one in such a sense that the legal consequences of his transgression fell on them as well as on him. Why should it not have been the same with Jesus and His people, if they were bound together by a similar tie? Instead of the Head suffering the penalty and the members going absolutely free, how were they not all involved in one common doom?

Let us look at this objection, and see what it amounts to. In the first place, the analogy between Christ and Adam is brought out by Paul to show the parallel and yet the contrast between the way in which sin and death on the one hand, and righteousness and life on the other hand, were introduced into the world. Mankind was put on trial in the person of its natural head, and fell through his transgression. The elect of God, those whom the Father gave to Christ, were subjected to a second trial in the person of Him, in whom they were chosen from eternity, and to whom they were destined to be united, and were restored through His obedience unto death. So far the two cases were parallel in principle, though opposite in result. But the apostle argues that if sin and death could thus pass from the one transgressor to the many whom he represented, much more, under the govern-

ment of a God of love, may righteousness and life be in like manner transferred from the one Redeemer to the many who were represented by Him. And the transcendent greatness of the work of Christ appears in this, that while Adam's one transgression involved us all in sin and death, the work of Christ neutralises the countless transgressions of those whom He represented. And so "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."¹

Now, we ask, Is it conceivable that the only result of the marvellous grace of the Lord Jesus in uniting Himself to His people by a tie so close and tender, should be that He should share their condemnation without accomplishing any deliverance for them? Surely not. If it had been a mere man like ourselves that had thus identified himself with us in order to save us from sin and death, the generous act might have issued in nothing better than his involving himself in utter ruin. But consider who it was that became our head and representative. It was the Eternal Son of God, who for our sakes was made flesh, and became as the God-man, the Head of His body, the Church. That Church may be compared to the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. "Its brightness was excellent, and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay."² We do not dwell at present upon the great

¹ Rom. v. 20.

² Dan. ii. 31-33.

diversity in point of function and value, of strength and beauty, that prevails among the members of the Church, corresponding to the like qualities in Nebuchadnezzar's image. That is worked out by Paul in great detail in the twelfth chapter of 1st Corinthians. The point to be noted is that the head was of fine gold, vastly more precious than any other part of that great image. Christ Jesus is that Head of gold. He is "the chiefest among ten thousand," "fairer than the sons of men." The infinite glory of His divine person gave infinite value to His atoning death. Divine justice received full satisfaction for the dishonour we had cast upon it by His death upon the Cross. The blow descended on our Head, and when He gave up the ghost, having endured the pangs of crucifixion and the hidings of His Father's face, He could truly say, "It is finished." A complete atonement was made to law and justice by the Head on behalf of all His members, and nothing further remained for them to suffer, but those disciplinary chastisements which are a means of purification and a proof of love.

We grant that there is no exact parallel in ordinary human affairs to the case of Christ suffering for His people to atone for their sins, and obeying the law on their behalf to provide a righteousness for them. There are analogies indeed which may help us to form some idea of the principles involved in this transaction, such as the responsibility of a nation for the acts of its accredited ambassadors, and the liability of

children to suffer for the sins of their parents. But we must beware of the temptation to defend the suretyship of Christ by the help of such imperfect analogies, for these are cases merely of inherited suffering, not of imputed guilt. And they are just the sort of illustrations employed by Bushnell in his attempts to evacuate the vicarious sacrifice of Christ of any penal element. We admit, therefore, that such a transaction as the death of the innocent in the room of the guilty could not be allowed in human jurisprudence, and for this obvious reason, that the case is so unique, the relation between our Lord and those for whom He died finding its only human parallel in that of Adam and those whom he involved in sin and death. And here it may be worth noticing that the view we have taken of these two transactions, while it must be accepted on divine authority, is in both cases supported by facts which cannot otherwise be explained. Thus the representative character of our first parent, and the implication of the whole human family in the guilt of his first transgression, while a doctrine of supernatural revelation, is confirmed by the sufferings and death and innate depravity of infants who are incapable of actual sin. Then the representative character of our Lord—the fact that He suffered death not merely under the hand of man, but by the judgment of God as the penalty of sin,—this too is a doctrine of revelation, but it is confirmed by the facts of the agony and the Cross. The cup put into His hand by the Father, which, had it been

possible consistently with our salvation, the Saviour would fain have avoided drinking, the desertion which He felt so bitterly in His dying hours,—these not only harmonise with the view that He was then suffering the penal consequences of our sin, but cannot otherwise be adequately explained.

But here an objection may be raised. It may be said, the whole strength of the orthodox view lies in the application to the divine government of the analogies drawn from human jurisprudence—the stern, inexorable character of the law,—the necessity for its penalties being rigidly enforced. But having used these analogies to show the impossibility of forgiveness without satisfaction to the law, we now abandon them, and say that the case of Christ dying for His people is not to be judged by them, being peculiar and unique. This objection is plausible, but nothing more. It fails to discriminate between the proper sphere of justice and of sovereignty. What we maintain is that, if God be the Moral Governor and Judge, He must in that capacity act upon those principles of justice which He has implanted in the human breast, and that both because they are a part of the divine image in which we were created, and because we feel instinctively that they are of universal and necessary obligation. But the question here is not as to the universal applicability of these principles of justice. It is this: Might not God, in the exercise of His sovereignty as Creator, constitute the human race so that it might be dealt with, both as a congeries of

units, each of them accountable for his own actions, and as an organic whole, so closely and mysteriously united that the Head might be appointed to represent the members, and the members held responsible for the action of the Head? We hold that the teaching of Scripture is that this is what God actually did, and that the very constitution of human nature, and the fact of its being dealt with federally or representatively in the person of our first parent, opened up a way for our redemption, in consistency with divine justice, by a second application of the principle of headship.

There is one objection strongly urged by Macleod Campbell to the Calvinistic theory, which we are bound to admit to be perfectly valid. It is this,—that it cannot be held along with the doctrine of universal atonement. We frankly acknowledge that, if the view we have indicated gives relief in some directions from the pressure of difficulties on the score of justice, it certainly implies that the Atonement is co-extensive with that body of which Christ is the Head—*i.e.* the Church, the elect, the ultimately saved. Now, we know there are many who look on this view with the greatest repugnance, and who say that on these terms they could not preach the Gospel, for they would have nothing to offer to a sinner if they could not tell him that Christ died for all. But what have they to offer sinners on the assumption of a universal atonement? If they hold along with this the doctrine of universal salvation, then they are consistent enough,

but in that case the preaching of the Gospel is rather superfluous, since men shall be saved whether they hear and believe it or not. But if they do not believe that all are to be saved, then we are persuaded that what they have to offer the sinner on the ground of a universal atonement, as distinguished from what we can offer him on the theory of its limitation, is illusory and vain. It is poor comfort to tell a lost sinner that Christ by His death has merely put him in a salvable state, or to tell one whose iniquities have taken hold upon him, and who trembles at the words, "the wages of sin is death," that public justice has been satisfied, and that his sin may possibly be forgiven. Nor will the theory of a double reference in the Atonement,—one to the elect, and another to the world at large,—give him any satisfaction, for the question will at once arise, In which of the two aspects is it available for me? Is it in that which carries with it the certainty of salvation, or in that which is compatible with my being after all a cast-away?

The view which has long commended itself to our own mind is this, that we find running parallel with each other all through the Word of God two different aspects of redemption, the one regarded from a divine, and the other from a human point of view. And this is true not merely of the work of the Son, but also of the part performed by the Father and the Spirit. Viewed from the Godward side, the plan of salvation, from its conception in eternity to its completion at the

Second Coming of the Lord, is exact and sharply defined, limited to those who shall be ultimately saved. Viewed from the manward side, it is more vague and general, and may be said to be indefinitely universal. On the one side, we have the Father represented as choosing a people in Christ before the foundation of the world, every one of whom is predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son; the Son is represented as laying down His life for the sheep, that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him; and the Spirit as quickening this chosen and redeemed people when dead in trespasses and sins, and dwelling in them ever after. Then, on the other side, we are told of God the Father that He so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life, and that He will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The Son is said to have given Himself a ransom for all, to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. And the Spirit is represented as striving with men, producing convictions and impressions even on those who are not ultimately saved. Now, it is vain for us to attempt to reconcile those apparently conflicting aspects of the work of redemption as carried on by the three Persons of the Godhead, but it is worse than vain to deny or ignore either. Arminianism of the Pelagian type cuts the knot by repudiating the Godward side, while hyper-Calvinism excludes the manward. And all the various errors

that lie between these extremes will be found to consist in a futile attempt to construct a symmetrical and self-consistent theory by leaving out certain portions of both sides, and piecing the remainders. The only proper course is to acknowledge both, giving each the place and proportion which it has in the inspired volume. In this respect the true theology is broader than the false.

It may here be objected, that this way of solving the difficulty arising from the apparently conflicting statements of Scripture as to the scope of the redemptive work of Christ, by attempting to hold both views, in a state of solution, as it were, in our minds, is an utter impossibility. These views, it may be said, are mutually contradictory, and it is simply a truism to say of two contradictories that they cannot both be true. The love of God the Father was either limited to the elect, or it was not. It is vain for us to maintain that it was limited to a definite selected number, and yet that it embraced the whole world. We may *say* this, but our minds are so constituted that we cannot intelligently believe it. And the same thing is true of the Atonement made by the Son, and its application by the Holy Spirit. We may hold that these have been restricted to the elect, or extended to all mankind, but we cannot rationally combine both these beliefs in our mind at the same time.

To this we reply that there are some subjects to which the ordinary logical canon regarding con-

tradictries cannot be applied, and for this reason, that they are too broad for us to survey, too deep for us to fathom. There are truths so vast that our minds can only grasp a portion of them. They run out into mystery where we cannot follow them. Two of these truths, imperfectly apprehended by us, may seem to be mutually contradictory, yet if each of them can be established by its own proper evidence, we ought not to reject either because we cannot correlate them. The connecting link that unites them, that makes them part of the rounded whole of truth, may lie beyond our ken, in that mystery in which they are both partially concealed. The omniscient God may see them not as contradictory, but as complementary, and if He reveals them to our faith, it is ours to receive them as little children. Illustrations of this can easily be given. One is the transcendence of God as the Creator and Ruler of the universe, and His immanence in that universe as its animating and sustaining power. These are two distinct views of God's relation to the Cosmos that can both be made good by appropriate proofs, yet to us they seem to be contradictory and mutually exclusive. We are not, however, on that account to reject either, but to make room for both in our minds, however impossible it may be for us to harmonise them. The same thing is true of the sovereignty of God, on the one hand, and the freedom and responsibility of man upon the other. Both are to be accepted on their own proper evidence, but

how to correlate them as parts of one consistent whole is a problem which has long exercised and completely baffled the acutest human minds.

But to resume. It may help to make the twofold aspect of redemption a little clearer if we represent it to the eye. Take *A*, *B*, and *C* to denote the Godward, and α , β , γ the manward view of the part performed by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the work of our redemption. Thus:—

<i>A</i> . The Father's love to the elect.	α . The Father's love to the world.
<i>B</i> . The Son's dying for "the sheep," those "given to Him" by the Father.	β . The Son's sacrifice for the "sins of the whole world."
<i>C</i> . The Spirit's regenerating and sanctifying work in the elect.	γ . The common operations of the Spirit.

Now, the ultra-Calvinist frames a perfectly consistent scheme by holding the doctrines indicated in the left hand column and labelled *A*, *B*, *C*, while he sets himself to explain away all the passages of Scripture that seem to teach the views represented by the right hand column, α , β , γ . On this line desperate efforts used to be made to prove that when God is said to have loved the world, this must mean "the elect world," because they are "the better part of the world," and so forth. These interpretations have been pretty much laughed out of court. No one ventures on them now; though there is still on the part of high Calvinists a jealousy

of any assertion in other than Scriptural language of the love of God to the world at large. Arminians, on the other hand, of the lower or Pelagian type, represent the opposite extreme. They obtain an equally self-consistent scheme by holding to the doctrines in the right hand column, denying the other side represented by *A*, *B*, *C*, and forcing another sense on the Scriptures that seem to teach it. It is difficult to do this with the numerous statements that can be adduced in proof of the Father's electing love, and the Spirit's special grace. But they attempt to shew, in regard to the one, either that men are chosen not to everlasting life, but only to certain outward privileges, or that they are chosen to life on the ground of the faith which it was foreseen that they would exercise and the good works that they would do. In regard to the other, they maintain the doctrine of universal grace bestowed by the Holy Spirit equally on all, but received and improved by some—rejected and frustrated by others. It would be far more honest and straightforward to throw Paul and his doctrines overboard at once than to torture his words into a sense the very opposite of that in which he used them. The description given by "Rabbi" Duncan of these two systems, Hyper-Calvinism and Pelagian Arminianism, was a very happy one, when he said the one was like "a beautiful palace without a door; the house is perfect, but there is no getting into it"; while the other "sets before men an open door, but when you have

gone through it, you find nothing; there is no house to the door.”¹

Modified Calvinism, like that of Dr Wardlaw, consists in holding *A*, the doctrine of sovereign election, and *C*, the doctrine of special grace, along with the broader side of redemption represented by α , β , γ , but rejecting *B*. Some of Dr Wardlaw's students saw the logical inconsistency of this position, and carrying out their teacher's principles to their natural conclusion, landed in full-blown Arminianism, which led to their expulsion from the Congregationalist Divinity Hall. The inconsistency is indeed obvious enough. For the restriction of the atoning work of Christ which *B* represents has no reference to its intrinsic sufficiency to redeem the whole human race, its adaptation to all men, or the offer of an interest in it to all those to whom the Gospel comes. It refers solely to the destination of the Atonement—the parties whom Christ intended to save when He offered up His life. Now, if we admit, as Wardlaw did, that the Father elected not all but some to everlasting life, and that the Spirit effectually calls not all but some only by His grace, how can we hold that there was no corresponding limitation in the mind of the Son when He laid down His life, without introducing discord and division into the counsels of the Godhead? Is it not almost impious to suppose that there is any want of unanimity among the Persons of the blessed Trinity? Is the Son more merciful than the Father?

¹ “Recollections of the late John Duncan, LL.D.” By the Rev. A. Moodie Stuart, D.D. Page 191.

Modified Arminianism again, like that of Wesley, holds to *C*, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's special grace, along with the wider aspect of the work of Father, Son, and Spirit represented by α , β , γ , but repudiates *A*, the doctrine of sovereign election by the Father, and *B*, the limitation in any sense of Christ's atoning work to the elect. This view is obviously liable to the same objection as the former. It represents the Father and the Son as setting themselves in the most absolute and unqualified sense to save the whole human race, but as frustrated in this generous purpose—by what? Not by the obstinate unbelief of man—at least not by that alone, for that would be the consistent Arminianism to which we have already referred, that retains in its creed only the broader aspect α , β , γ , and rejects entirely *A*, *B*, *C*. No, this evangelical Arminianism, just because it is evangelical, holding the corruption of human nature, and the need of special and not mere universal grace, actually represents the work of the Spirit as narrower in the sphere of its operation than that of the Father and the Son. The Father is represented as longing, and the Son as dying, for the salvation of all men, in the most absolute and unqualified sense. Yet the Spirit will not impart to all, but only to a certain number, that regenerating grace without which the love of the Father and the sacrifice of the Son cannot save them. The redemption is destined for all and accomplished for all, but the Holy Spirit will not apply it to all. Such a view has only to be clearly

stated to be utterly rejected and disowned. And yet it is no caricature, but a true description of the position taken up by those who repudiate election and particular redemption, and yet maintain the necessity of special as distinguished from a common or universal grace.

Perhaps it may be said that we are basing the view we contend for too much on mere argument, and too little on express Scripture statement. It may be urged that the whole strain of Biblical teaching is, to lay stress on the universality of the Atonement, while there is much that points to a certain limitation in the electing love of the Father and the saving grace of the Holy Ghost, and that we must accept this teaching, even though it may seem to lead to conclusions which we find it difficult logically to defend. Now, we admit that for some of the positions laid down in the parallel columns given above, the Scripture evidence is very slight, while for others it is very abundant. Thus it will be found that about an equal measure of Biblical support can be adduced for *A* and α , the special love of the Father to His elect people, and His general love to the world at large. Under the former head we have such passages as Romans viii. 29, 30: "For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren: and whom He foreordained, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Rom. ix. 16: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that

runneth, but of God that hath mercy." 1 Cor. i. 27: "But God chose the foolish things of the world, that He might put to shame them that are wise," &c. Eph. i. 4, 5: "Even as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world," &c. 2 Thess. ii. 13: "But we are bound to give thanks to God alway for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation," &c. 2 Tim. i. 9: "Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal." These are some of the passages that may be ranged under *A*. Others might be given from the writings of Peter and of John. Then under *a*, there are such statements as those in Ezek. xxxiii. 11: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." 1 Tim. ii. 4: "God our Saviour, who willeth that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." 2 Pet. iii. 9: "The Lord is . . . longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." John iii. 16: "For God so loved the world that He gave," &c.

But when we come to search for passages of Scripture bearing on the work of the Son, we find those under *B*, the vague and general, or indefinitely universal aspect of the Atonement, far more numerous than those which seem to ascribe to it any limitation. Thus we read, 1 John ii. 2: "And He is the propitia-

tion for our sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." 1 Tim. ii. 6 : " Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all." Heb. ii. 9 : " that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man." 2 Cor. v. 14 : " Because we thus judge, that one died for all," &c. Rom. xiv. 15 : " Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died." On the other hand, the passages which indicate some restriction in the purpose of Christ's death are comparatively few, and they are rather suggestions than positive statements. Thus, Mark x. 45 : " The Son of Man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many." Mark xiv. 54 : " This is My blood of the covenant, which is shed for many." Why did our Lord in both these cases use the limited word " many," rather than the universal word " all " ? John x. 14 : " I am the Good Shepherd : and I know Mine own, and Mine own know Me, even as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father ; and I lay down My life for the sheep." The tone of this whole passage is discriminative. Christ's own sheep are distinguished from those that are not His ; and His laying down His life for them is mentioned as one of their peculiar privileges, just as their intimate knowledge of each other was.

When, however, we come to consider the passages bearing on the work of the Holy Ghost, we find the case reversed. Those that refer to His work in the hearts of God's people are much more numerous than those which treat of His operations on the world at large. We do read of the Spirit striving with

men in antediluvian times,¹ and of some who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost,² and yet afterwards fall away and perish. We read also of His convincing the world of sin and righteousness and judgment,³ though this passage may refer to that work of saving grace by which He brings God's chosen ones out of a world of sin. But these statements are few in comparison with those in which He is represented as quickening, enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting the saints of God, helping their infirmities, teaching them to pray, dwelling in them as in a temple, baptising them into one body, keeping them in union with each other and with the Lord.

If we look at the subject carefully we shall see that this is not strange and unaccountable, but just what we might have anticipated. For the work of the Son was objective, under whatever aspect we regard it. His life was a pattern to be studied, an example to be followed. His death was an atonement for sin, a satisfaction to justice, a thing designed to remove all hindrances to communion with God. Even those who insist most strongly on the moral influence of that death upon the hearts and lives of men admit that it is by the contemplation of a work outside of us, done by another on our behalf, that this change takes place. The work of the Spirit on the other hand is subjective. It transpires within the soul. The Spirit of God imparts, sustains, and perfects a new life within, uniting Himself to our spirits in such a way that it is

¹ Gen. vi. 3.² Heb. vi. 5, 6.³ John xvi. 8.

said that we are in the Spirit and that the Spirit is in us,¹ that he helps our infirmities,² and even makes our unutterable groanings in prayer His own. This, then, is the characteristic distinction between the work of the Son and of the Spirit, that the one is objective and the other subjective. Accordingly, it is the former that is presented to our faith as that part of the redeeming work which appeals to us as sinners, and of which we are to take hold in order to be saved. It is not to the Spirit and His work, but to Jesus lifted up for our salvation, as the serpent of brass was lifted up in the wilderness, that we are to look, that we may obtain eternal life. It is not on the Spirit but on the Lord Jesus Christ that we are to believe, if we would be saved. Hence the emphasis laid in Scripture on the indefinite, the general, the manward aspect of the Atonement, as that which brings to sinners the message of love and peace. Hence, too, the emphasis laid upon the more precise and definite Godward aspect of the work of the Holy Ghost, that work being chiefly carried on in those who have already obeyed the Gospel call.

But how does all this bear upon the question how we are to preach a free Gospel, if we believe in a limited Atonement? What, in that case, have we to offer to the sinner as the object of his faith? Well, we can begin with what we have called the manward aspect of the Atonement, and say, "Jesus Christ died for sinners, and you are a sinner; do

¹ Rom. viii. 9.

² Rom. viii. 26.

you believe that?" We grant that this is not saving faith, but it is a step towards it. What, then, is the next step? How are we to pass over from that vague and indefinite view of the Atonement in which the awakened soul cannot rest, to the precise and definite view which, when embraced by faith, brings with it solid peace? Some would say that the next step is for the sinner to believe "Christ died for me." But if this belief rests simply on the general statement "Christ died for sinners," the premises do not warrant the conclusion; for, unless that statement be absolutely universal, he may not be one of those sinners for whom Christ died. If it rests on the assumption that Christ died as a substitute for every individual of the human race, it is built upon a false foundation. If it rests upon the fact that there is a sense in which Christ may be said to have died for all, the question remains, Will this vague, general interest in the death of Christ, common to Him with Herod or Judas Iscariot, avail for his salvation? Not thus is the gulf between the mere general belief that Christ died for sinners and a well-grounded assurance of my own salvation to be bridged over. The stepping-stone by which we pass over from the vague manward to the definite Godward aspect of the Atonement is the certainty we have that God's elect, and those who believe through grace, shall be found in the end exactly to correspond.

This certainty is based upon the teaching of Scripture in many places, but is nowhere more clearly

brought out than in two consecutive sentences uttered by our Lord Himself in that wonderful discourse upon the Bread of Life which is recorded in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel: "And this is the will of Him that sent Me; that of all that which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."¹ There can be no doubt that in both these statements the same parties are described, but from a different point of view. They are those members of the human race whom Christ, in accordance with the will of the Father who sent Him, will raise up at the last day. In the first of these sentences, however, they are represented as parts of a whole, not a fragment of which is to be lost; while in the second they are represented as separate individuals, each of whom is to enjoy eternal life. In a word, they are first described collectively, as constituting the elect of God given to Christ in its totality by the Father, and then they are described individually, as those who one by one behold the Son and believe upon Him. But the elect and the believing will be found at last to be identically the same. This entitles us to say, Christ died in the fullest and most absolute sense of the words for every sinner who will have Him. We have now passed over to the divine side, and are no longer occupied with

¹ John vi. 38-40.

the truth, precious as it is, that Christ died for sinners generally, or with the further truth, precious as it also is, that He died in some sense for all men,—that there are none who do not derive some benefit from His death. We have now got beyond that, and can say to the poor, trembling sinner who is longing to know whether the death of Christ, in all its atoning virtue and in all its saving power, is for him, “Yes, if you will have it so.” Christ with all His benefits, Christ and a full salvation, are yours, if you will accept of them by faith. We do not say that the belief even of this proposition is saving faith. There is no statement that can be framed the mere belief of which will save. For true faith is not simply an act of the intellect, but of the whole soul. We may believe that Christ died for sinners, and that we are sinners, and yet we may be lost. We may further believe that Christ died to atone for the sins and secure the salvation of every sinner who will accept of Him, and yet we may not be saved. What, then, is needed? Simply that we do accept Him with all our heart. This is the missing link, which no mere intellectual effort can supply. To the assent of the understanding there must be added the consent of the heart, and the result is saving faith.

Now, mark the advantages connected with this way of presenting the Atonement when preaching the Gospel to the unconverted. In the first place, we

keep the divine and human aspects of that great transaction perfectly distinct, and thus avoid the confusion and uncertainty which the mixing of them up is sure to occasion. We give to each its proper place, approaching the sinner first on the human side, and then, when he is awakened and enlightened, leading him up to his true resting-place in the divine. In the next place, we have a veritable atonement to offer to every sinner under heaven, though we do not believe in the universality of that atonement. Nay, we have something far better to offer than those whose Gospel consists in the offer of a universal atonement, while they do not believe in a universal salvation. For we have to offer them an interest in a sacrifice which secures the salvation of all those in whose behalf it was presented,—not a sacrifice which leaves many of those for whom it was offered up to perish in their sins. And lastly, this view keeps prominently before the sinner's mind the fact that, while belief in Gospel truth is much, it is not enough without the acceptance of a personal Saviour. All the other ways of presenting the Gospel to which we have referred seem to make the salvation of the sinner to hinge upon the belief of the proposition set before him, and hence we are blamed for not presenting to him some statement the belief of which will amount to saving faith. We admit that we cannot present him with any clean-cut formula by believing which he may be saved. We admit that we preach the Gospel to him in a sense hypothetically—"Christ,

with all the benefits of His atoning death, is yours, if you will have Him." For we believe that this is putting the matter in its proper light; making the sinner's salvation hinge upon a personal trust in the living Christ, an acceptance of Him as his Saviour, a submission to Him as his Lord.

To conclude: it is sometimes said, and the saying has an aspect of candour, that all these different views of the Atonement are true and important, and that, instead of contending as to which is best, it were better to make our theory wide enough to comprehend them all. But this is just what our opponents will not hear of. Our doctrine of the Atonement,—that it was designed in the first place to satisfy the claims of justice, and lay an objective ground for the forgiveness of sins—they utterly reject. We, on the other hand, maintain that this is of prime importance; that not until this has been accomplished can the moral influence of the Cross, in drawing the sinner back to God, be effectively put forth. But if this be admitted, our controversy with them is at an end. It is no interest of ours to deny that Christ in His great love threw Himself with intense sympathy into the midst of human sin and sorrow, that His whole life was the most winning exhibition of the spirit of sonship, and His death the brightest manifestation of divine love. Nay, these are truths which we rejoice to believe and teach as well as they. And while we cannot admit that they exhaust the meaning of the language of

Scripture in reference to the Cross, we freely acknowledge that these views might be more insisted on than they often are, and that they would impart a great moral force and a tender human interest to the preaching of the Gospel.

III.

ALTERNATIVE THEORIES OF THE ATONEMENT DISCUSSED.

THERE are more senses than one in which these words of Christ, uttered at a time when He had a vivid foresight of His approaching death, have been fulfilled: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Their primary meaning seems to be, that, towards the Cross, as the brightest manifestation of divine love, the hearts of men in all ages and in all lands would be drawn by an irresistible attraction, and this has indeed been fully realised. But it is also true that around that Cross all thoughtful Christian minds have gathered, some looking with reverent awe, and some with baffled curiosity, but all with deepest interest, into this great central mystery of the faith. The fact being admitted, that the incarnate Son of God suffered a cruel and a shameful death, at the hands of wicked men indeed, but by the appointment of the Father, and with His own consent, the great question is: What was the purpose of His death? Was it intended to meet any necessities in the divine nature and government, or was it only intended to act as a great spiritual force on the spiritual nature of man? There can be no doubt that the great current of evangelical preaching fol-

lowing the channel of Scripture language in its more obvious sense, runs in the direction of presenting the former as the primary object of the death of Christ. But there has always been a class of minds to which this view has been distasteful. They have recoiled from it as involving an unwarrantable limitation of the free exercise of the divine mercy, and introducing artificial human arrangements into the divine government of the world. And they felt that they were on more solid, familiar, and congenial ground when expatiating on the marvellous fitness of this great event to touch the deepest springs of feeling in the human heart, and to bring back the prodigal son to his Father's house.

The special feature in the evangelical view of the Atonement which has awakened the antipathy of many is the doctrine of substitution. Taking advantage of the unguarded exposition of it given by some of its advocates, they have presented it in the harshest and most forbidding form, and then assailed it, sometimes with the keen shafts of polished sarcasm, sometimes with the blunter weapons of coarse invective. Illustrations of this might easily be given from the writings of Maurice, Robertson of Brighton, Bushnell, and Martineau. But those who reject one view of the nature of the Atonement and the ground of its efficacy must be prepared to put another and a better in its place. And so a great variety of alternative theories have been proposed by those who could not bring themselves to accept the ordinary evangelical doctrine.

To the consideration of some of the more important of these we now propose to turn our attention, classifying and arranging them as best we may. This, however, is by no means an easy task, for these theories often overlap, and thus we sometimes find the same writer maintaining two of them, and trying by the help of both to explain the meaning and purpose of the Atonement.

To begin with those which most nearly approximate to the doctrine of substitution, we find the atoning work of Christ described by some as *the payment of a debt*. There is nothing unscriptural in this definition. Sin is undoubtedly represented in Scripture as a debt, for we are taught by our Lord Himself to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." It is a debt that we cannot liquidate, so that we are in danger of being cast into prison, there to remain till we have paid the uttermost farthing, that is to say, for evermore. This is therefore a Scriptural view of the method of our redemption. But this is not substitution, for one who generously comes forward and pays another's debts does not thereby become his substitute. And so this idea of the payment of a price for our release does not give an adequate account of the work of Christ on our behalf, though it may be conveniently used as a passing illustration. It was this conception of the payment of a ransom that led some of the early Fathers to propound the strange notion that the price was paid to Satan to redeem us from his power, one of them giving a touch of grim humour to the transaction

by suggesting that the great adversary in insisting upon the payment over-reached himself.

But not to dwell further on this "grotesque fancy," as it has been truly called, to which, for obvious reasons, some have attached too great importance, even when we say that the ransom was paid to divine justice, this does not give a sufficient or satisfactory view of the Atonement. For sin is not a mere debt that may be cancelled like any other debt by the payment, it matters not by whom, of a sufficient price, which the creditor is bound to accept and thereupon to set the debtor free.¹ No, sin is a crime which cannot be expiated by the payment of a price, however great, but only by the endurance of the penalty attached by the law to the offence. In all ordinary cases that penalty must be suffered by the transgressor in person. If the sufferings of a substitute are to be accepted in his stead, that can only be in virtue of a special arrangement and by a very special act of grace. In short, there are obstacles in the way of the forgiveness of sins which the debtor-and-creditor theory does not touch. The idea of our escaping from the consequences of our sins by the payment of a ransom may seem to afford an easy outlet from the moral difficulties which surround the doctrine of substitution, but it does so by ignoring the gravest aspect of our sin. We have not merely run up a score that we cannot pay, we have incurred guilt that no price

¹ See Turretine, Loc. xiv. Quaest. 10, § 8; Hodge's "Outlines," p. 309; Hodge's "Atonement," pp. 34, 35.

can expiate, we have committed iniquity for which no ransom can atone. We may, of course, use the language of Scripture and speak of redemption as a ransom, not however as a substitute for the doctrine of substitution, but only as a side light—a passing illustration.

A second theory put forth with the view of evading the difficulties connected with substitution, and yet giving effect to the teaching of Scripture regarding the death of Christ as a satisfaction to divine justice, is that which was advocated by the late Dr Wardlaw, and is commonly known as the “*governmental*” view of the Atonement. It is frankly admitted by theologians of this school that offended justice had to be satisfied before sin could be forgiven, and the sinner restored to favour. But then it was not to commercial but to public justice that this satisfaction had to be made. Commercial justice might demand the “pound of flesh,” an exact equivalent in the form of suffering, for the offence that had been committed. But who could imagine our Heavenly Father insisting on such hard and inexorable terms? What then? Must the sinner be permitted to go free, with perhaps an admonition to be upon his good behaviour for the time to come? By no means. That would be a very dangerous precedent, fraught with the most baneful consequences to the intelligent universe of God. It would be a positive encouragement to sin, for it would be something like a guarantee that, however far God’s creatures might go astray, they might count upon His

remitting the threatened penalty, and letting them go unpunished. This would be contrary to public justice, and detrimental to the highest interests of all God's creatures. It was necessary, therefore, that, if sinners were forgiven, that forgiveness should be granted in connection with some awful demonstration of the holiness of God and His deep abhorrence of sin. It was with this view that He sent His own Son into the world, to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and at last to die in weakness and agony on the accursed tree. This was intended as a demonstration to the whole universe of God's intense hatred of sin, that none of us might make light of it because it is so freely pardoned, and that none of God's holy creatures might presume upon impunity if they should follow in the steps of sinful men.

Is this a true account of the divinely revealed method of redemption? Is it even plausible? Let us see. It is easy to create a prejudice against that justice of God which Christ was set forth as a propitiation to declare by calling it commercial justice, with all the suggestions of hard and narrow dealing which that expression carries with it. But is there really any difference in kind between commercial and public justice? Is not justice one and the same to whatever department of human life it is applied, whether it is practised by an honest shopkeeper or by a wise and far-seeing statesman. If indeed there be a difference between commercial and public justice it is altogether in favour of the former. For the one

is justice pure and simple, that gives to every man his due. The other is too often mere expediency, doing what it is thought will create a good impression and secure the best results upon the whole. To put it plainly—if the sufferings inflicted upon Christ were neither due to Him for any sins of His own, nor endured by Him as the substitute of His people, then they were neither a satisfaction to commercial justice, nor to public justice, nor to justice of any kind. They were absolutely undeserved, and therefore cruelly unjust. And this was, forsooth, a demonstration to the universe of the holiness of God! No wonder that this “governmental” theory of the Atonement, at one time so highly lauded both in this country and America, is now, like a burst balloon, consigned to the limbo of exploded and forgotten things.

A third theory may be described as that of “*sympathy*.” It is brought out with great power and plausibility in Dr Bushnell’s work on “The Vicarious Sacrifice.”

There is something characteristic of the writer’s standpoint in the very title of his book. One would expect it to be an exposition and defence of the substitutionary nature of the death of Christ. In reality it is an attempt to shew that He was not in any proper sense our substitute, and that His sufferings were not penal. Retaining deliberately much of the language of orthodox theology, he evacuates it of its proper meaning. His position is thus essentially that of transition from the old theology to the new. He

clings to the old forms of speech, while he has drifted away from the old doctrine; and here and there he even betrays a lurking suspicion of the tendency of his later views, especially in his counsels to preachers to be careful to present them in what he calls sacrificial symbols, altar forms. Still there is no ambiguity about his teaching. He repudiates with the utmost energy the idea of any penal element in the sufferings of Christ. He caricatures the orthodox doctrine, presenting it in its most extreme and exaggerated form, and takes no pains to conceal the mingled feeling of contempt and repugnance with which he regards it. And he expounds his own view with the utmost clearness, and with great wealth of imagery and illustration.

His view of vicarious sacrifice is simply this: that Christ, out of the great love of His heart, and for our salvation, burdened Himself with our sorrows, and even with our sins; that He "was entered into them,"—to use His own favourite expression,—just as a loving mother would make the case of her prodigal son her own. This, of course, is merely by sympathy—not by anything like legal imputation. This becomes very plain when he proceeds to shew that in this sense all holy Beings are, as he calls it, "in vicarious sacrifice,"—God the Father and the Holy Spirit, and even the angels and redeemed souls, as truly as Jesus Christ Himself. In pursuing this line of argument, Bushnell, as might have been expected, says many beautiful and touching things, but one

would have thought that it might have dawned upon so acute a writer, that he was simply eliminating all that is distinctive from the work of Christ. Take, *e.g.*, his chapter on the Holy Spirit in vicarious sacrifice; he says that "He works in love as Christ did, and suffers all the incidents of love,—compassion, wounded feeling, sorrow, concern, burdened sympathy, violated patience,—taking even upon Him, to bear them and their sins, precisely as Christ Himself did in His sacrifice. He is in fact a Christ continued, in all that distinguishes the offering and priesthood of Christ, and is fitly represented in the same way, under a priestly figure, as our intercessor." If this be so, it is natural to ask why Christ alone is set before us as the Saviour, on whose priestly sacrifice we are to rely, through faith in whom we are to be saved. Surely all this should be shared by the Holy Spirit. And a dim suspicion of this consequence of his teaching seems to have crossed the author's mind, for he does say: "At the same time, it is to be admitted that there is a good deal of language applied to Christ and His work in the Scriptures which is not applied to the Holy Spirit; which also it is no part of my present subject to explain." And he adds: "I do not undertake to identify Christ and the Spirit in such a sense as to make them do the same things, or work by the same method." And yet he has so identified them in office and in work, as to leave no difference between them but this: that the vicarious sacrifice of the one was outward and visible, while

that of the other is inward and invisible. But this certainly is not sufficient to account for the broad distinction which Scripture makes between the function of the second and third Persons of the Godhead in the economy of redemption.

The great object of the vicarious sacrifice, in this sense ascribed to Christ, was to obtain that moral power over the minds and hearts of men which was necessary to bring them back to God. But the question of course remains, What provision was made for meeting the claims of law and justice in connection with the salvation of sinful men? This, according to the orthodox view, was accomplished by the substitutionary sufferings and death of Christ. Bushnell spurns the idea of there being anything penal in the sacrifice of Christ. How, then, does he propose to deal with the justice and law of God? This part of his treatise is very laboured and very unsuccessful. First, he distinguishes between law before government and instituted government. Now, this distinction is purely ideal and theoretic, as Bushnell himself admits. His object in making it seems to be so to perplex the matter as practically to eliminate the idea of justice with its claims and penalties. First, he supposes man to violate the original uninstituted law. This is followed, of course, by very disastrous consequences. He is undone, however, "not by justice, but only by the inevitable recoil of his offended moral nature." In short he is represented rather as unfortunate than criminal. And so it is affirmed that God is morally

bound to save him, that His righteousness and His love will constrain Him to set up instituted government, and redemption along with it. Beginning with this distinction as a mere supposition, he ends by making use of it for most important purposes. First, treating the story of the Fall as a myth, he represents the first sin as specially concerned with this law before government, so that its consequences are rather natural than penal. And secondly, he says: "Here is the want and the true place of redemption. It must have some primary and even principal reference to the law before government, and not to any instituted law or statute, or judicial penalty existing under that." Then, when he comes to speak of instituted government, he takes it in its present complex form, as including penalty, providence, and grace. Thus, by a dexterous manipulation of this artificial and arbitrary distinction, the idea of redemption is surreptitiously introduced before there is time to consider whether law and justice present any obstacles to its introduction. Bushnell holds that instituted government, with its specific requirements, rewards, and penalties, is the co-factor of redemption. This is a perfectly gratuitous assumption. True of the law as given at Sinai, after redemption had been set on foot, it is a begging of the whole question to say that it is also true of any positive law given to God's unfallen creatures.

Another distinction on which Bushnell lays great stress is that between the righteousness and the justice of God, understanding by the one His essential

rightness, and by the other His vindictory firmness in maintaining His instituted law. He admits that the former is unalterable, but holds in regard to the latter that it is optional with the Supreme to inflict the penalty or to remit it. This is the very kernel of the matter. If this last point were proved, the controversy would be at an end. But the only proof offered is a flimsy distinction between God's righteousness in general and His vindictory justice in particular,—a distinction which he tries to make good by describing the latter in language appropriate only to the human passion of revenge. We utterly repudiate the description, and maintain that the retributive justice of God is not a passion, which it is at least as consistent with the divine perfection to restrain as to gratify, but that it is a calm and holy principle—in short, that it is nothing else than the divine righteousness in its relation to the transgressors of the law. To put it generally, the view of Bushnell is, that justice and mercy co-operate with a view to man's salvation, but that the claims of mercy are imperative, since God cannot but act upon the promptings of His love, while the claims of justice are optional, since He may forego His vengeance. This is a strange inversion of the natural order of things. Is it not an instinct in every human breast that the demands of justice are paramount, and that, until its interests have been secured, it would be a criminal weakness in any government or any judge to give effect to the pleadings of mercy? Is not the salvation offered in the

Gospel uniformly said to be of grace? And is not grace in its very nature free, a thing which God was at liberty, in the exercise of His mere good pleasure, either to give or to withhold?

Time will not permit us to follow Bushnell through his elaborate attempts to shew that the whole sacrificial system of the Old Testament, and the references to it in the New, can be harmonised with his view of vicarious sacrifice, and do not teach that the death of Christ was substitutionary or penal. It is an arduous task, as appears very plainly from the fact that he asserts that nothing is made in the ancient sacrifices of the death of the victim, and that the blood derived its efficacy from its being a symbol of life, or life-giving power, as if the Epistle to the Hebrews did not make everything turn upon the *death* of the victim, the *shedding* of blood, illustrating this by the fact that before a testament can take effect there must first be the death of the testator. Bushnell appears to be sensible of the weakness of his doctrine of the Atonement, as depending for its efficacy on moral influence alone; and with the view of fortifying it he dwells on two doctrines of a sterner character which the Saviour clearly taught, the one, that future punishment will be eternal, and the other, that He Himself is to be our judge. Yet after all there is a lingering dissatisfaction with this theory which he has so laboured to build up. He feels that there is a fatal subjectivity about this view of the work of Christ—that it throws us too much in upon ourselves, and he recom-

mends, as an antidote to this, the free use of altar terms. Listen to his words—

“Oppressed with guilt we should turn ourselves joyfully to Christ as the propitiation for our sins, Christ who hath borne the curse for us, Christ, who knew no sin, made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We should cry in our prayers: O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, take away our sins; or, thinking of that sacred blood, by whose drops that fell as touches of life on the world’s grand altar, Calvary, we should cry, Wash us, O Christ, in the blood of Thy Cross, and make us clean; or, wanting, in despair of ourselves, some Helper and Friend to bear the sins we cannot bear ourselves, we should take up tenderly the words of the poet, if not in his meaning, yet in the meaning which they ought to have—

‘My soul looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear,
When hanging on the accursèd tree,
And hopes her guilt was there.’”¹

Practically this looks very like an admission of the failure of his elaborately-argued theory to meet the wants of the human soul, and a falling back upon the Godward side of the Atonement—that is, expiation by a substitute—as a preliminary to the influence which it was designed to exercise on the heart of man. We have an interesting confirmation of this in the acknowledgment which he makes in a subsequent work on

¹ Bushnell’s “Vicarious Sacrifice,” p. 463. London, 1866.

"Forgiveness and Law,"¹ that in his former book he had regarded too exclusively the effect of the Atonement upon man, and had ignored its propitiatory influence on God. Still, even after making this admission, he shews his rooted aversion to the Catholic view of the object of the sacrifice of Christ by inventing in place of it an idea which had probably never occurred to any one but himself, and which no one else is likely to accept,—that God must overcome His repugnance to the sinner by making sacrifice on his behalf.

A fourth theory is that of "*the self-imputation of sin and confession of it by Christ.*" This is the view of Mr Macleod Campbell, as brought out in his book on "The Nature of the Atonement." In some respects it coincides with that of Dr Bushnell. There is the same recoil from the ideas of substitution and imputation in connection with the work of Christ, the same emphasis laid upon the moral and spiritual rather than the legal aspects of the transaction, and the same attempt to explain the Redeemer's sufferings as endured in sympathy with men, but not in their room and stead. But there is a calm deep seriousness about the one book, as contrasted with the dash and sparkle of the other. Macleod Campbell never caricatures the views of his opponents, never pushes his own, as Bushnell does, to utter paradox. He is eminently fair and candid, has a profound insight into

¹ Bushnell's "Forgiveness and Law," Introd. p. 10, Chap. I. pp. 40-52.

the spiritual realities with which he is dealing, and comes almost as near the orthodox doctrine of the Atonement as it is possible to do without actually embracing it. At the same time, it must be admitted that his style is heavy, and that he is occasionally mystical and obscure, so that it is not always easy fully to apprehend his meaning.

He quotes from Jonathan Edwards, whom he justly recognises as one of the ablest defenders of the older Calvinism, a statement to the effect that, in order to satisfaction for sin, there must needs be "either an equivalent punishment or an equivalent sorrow and repentance." Accepting this proposition as true, he further holds that of the two alternatives the latter, "an equivalent sorrow and repentance," is far more honouring to the law and glorifying to God than the former. But is it available? Sinful man can be made to endure an adequate punishment, but he cannot of himself adequately repent. True; but then Christ came to make this, the preferable alternative in every point of view, a possible one for man. By the appointment of the Father, and of His own free choice, He entered into humanity. He led a pure and perfect life, fulfilling the whole law by a filial spirit of trust, obedience, and submission to the Father, and by a brotherly spirit of self-sacrificing love to man. But He did more than this: as the representative of the Father He manifested to men His loving nature, and, as the representative of man, He suffered intensely both in body and spirit, and

thus confessed the sins of His brethren to the Father. His sufferings and death were not penal—were not endured in our room. Nor was it as mere suffering that they were of any avail. It was the perfect love and perfect holiness in which they were borne that constituted them a true contrition—a perfect repentance for our sins—"a perfect Amen in humanity to the judgment of God on the sin of man."¹ And if it be asked, How was this confession available for us, if Christ was not our substitute when His sufferings were endured? the answer is, that by faith in Christ we become one with Him. He becomes our life. His life of perfect contrition and perfect sonship becomes ours, not by any legal fiction, but in point of fact. We are forgiven and taken into the fellowship of sons, because, however imperfect our repentance and love may be as yet, they shall one day be perfect as Christ's are, for He is made of God unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. We are justified (in a sort of provisional way, we presume) the moment we believe, but we shall be more fully justified when the life of God is perfected within us. In fact, he seems to object to any such thing as imputed righteousness. It is a personal cleansing that we get in Christ, and nothing else. We confess we do not see how on this view of the matter the fact can be explained, that while the Scripture so emphatically speaks of God as imputing to us righteousness,²

¹ "The Nature of the Atonement," pp. 134, 135, 145.

² Rom. iv. 6, 11.

it never speaks of an imputed holiness, or an imputed wisdom. Surely this indicates something altogether peculiar in the way in which we are made partakers of Christ's righteousness; something wholly different from the way in which He becomes our wisdom and holiness and redemption. And what in that case are we to make of the parallel which the apostle draws between Christ's being made sin for us and our being made the righteousness of God in Him? If our being made the righteousness of God in Christ means that we are made personally righteousness, then His being made sin for us must mean that He was made personally sinful. But this is expressly excluded by the caveat thrown in by the apostle—"who knew no sin." The conclusion is inevitable. Either the parallel is entirely at fault, or the apostle's teaching is, that, as God made Christ to be sin for us, though He was personally sinless, so we are made the righteousness of God in Him, though personally unrighteous. In other words, God justifies the ungodly.¹

It is a significant fact that the attempt to eliminate the penal element from the sufferings of Christ seems always logically to lead to a departure from the Protestant doctrine of justification. Thus we find Bushnell labouring to prove that both in Hebrew and Greek the word which we translate "justify" has a moral and not a forensic meaning, and actually coining the barbarous word "righteoussing" to express his idea of justification as something different from

¹ Rom. iv. 5.

making righteous on the one hand, and *declaring righteous* on the other. Indeed, it seems plain that if the judicial element be excluded from the Atonement, it cannot be re-introduced at the point of the sinner's justification. And this is a serious practical defect in the exclusively moral view of the sacrifice of Christ. There is nothing in it to bring peace to an awakened conscience. As we remember a minister to have said, soon after the first visit of Mr Moody to this country, "I was as much inclined as any to make use of all that seemed good in the broader views of the Atonement. But there is one place where these views utterly break down, and that is the Inquiry Room." That the judicial element is practically excluded by Macleod Campbell is very evident. Satisfaction to law and justice by the death of a substitute being repudiated, he has nothing to put in its place but a moral and spiritual atonement, which consists in our appropriating Christ's confession of our sins, and entering into His filial spirit. Thus, he says, God's fatherly love is satisfied. His justice as Moral Governor, being quite secondary and subordinate, is, of course, satisfied at the same time. This, however, is not to meet the legal difficulty, but to walk round it. It may be true that the root-idea of God is fatherhood, that, in the order of nature, He is a father before He is a judge. But that does not prove that the judicial must always give place to the paternal. We grant that when all goes well, and the will of the creature is in unison with that of the Creator, the

idea of government will be merged and lost in that of loving fatherly care. But when the creature rebels against his God, defies His authority, breaks His law, a new state of things emerges, in which the claims of justice come to have the foremost place. Who, for example, would deny that it would be the sacred duty of a judge upon the bench to pronounce sentence of death upon his own son, if he were found guilty of a capital crime, although his affection for that son were so great that he would a thousand times rather have died for him than have been obliged to doom him to a felon's death?

One other feature of Macleod Campbell's teaching is the stress which he lays upon the prospective aspect of the Atonement—what it brings to us, in contrast with what it saves us from. He does not deny that orthodox writers speak of the privilege of adoption and the blessing of sanctification as being part of the redemption procured for us by Christ. But he holds that our view of the Atonement leads us practically to substitute a legal standing for a filial relation, and that we do not make the connection between the death of Christ and the holiness of His people sufficiently immediate and direct. Probably there is too much truth in both these charges brought against the writers of the evangelical school. But there is no reason why it should be so, except that we are all apt to take narrow and contracted views, and to lose sight of one side of truth when we are engaged in contemplating another. For the same act of faith

that justifies us by uniting us to Him who is the Fulfiller of the law, makes us also the children of God by uniting us to Him who is the well-beloved Son. And if we faithfully preach the doctrine of the Apostle Paul in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, we shall make the crucifixion of our old nature and the implanting of a new life within as direct and immediate an effect of our union to the crucified and risen Saviour as the new legal relation into which that union brings us.

Besides the objections which we have already indicated to Macleod Campbell's view, on the ground of his erroneous doctrine of justification, and his ignoring the claims of justice by merging the judicial in the fatherly character of God, it seems to us that in the very points where he thinks our theory fails his own conspicuously breaks down. His two objections to the orthodox view are—1. That it represents God as capable of the injustice of punishing the innocent for the guilty; and 2. That it represents us as being justified on the ground of another's righteousness by a sort of "legal fiction." Now, as to the objection on the score of justice: it is admitted that Jesus Christ, the one perfect man, was the prince of sufferers—that He endured inconceivable mental anguish and intense bodily suffering, issuing in death itself. All this befell Him by the appointment of the Father. How, we ask, was this consistent with divine justice, which gives to every one his due? We have an answer ready: He was our Substitute and Surety. He volun-

tarily entered into such a relation to the transgressors of God's law that the penalty was justly exacted at His hands. How does Macleod Campbell account for these sufferings? It is not enough to say that there is much suffering which is not penal—that “surely the tears of holy sorrow shed over the sins of others—the tears, for example, of a godly parent shed over a prodigal child—are not penal.” True; but these tears may be disciplinary. At all events, they are shed by one who is herself sinful. But this throws no light upon the unexampled sufferings of the Son of God in human nature—sufferings which were not merely the spontaneous recoil from sin, and the sympathy with sorrow, which all holy beings feel, but which were inflicted on Him by the Father, for “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him and to put Him to grief,” and which reached their climax when He cried, “My God, My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Macleod Campbell objects to the injustice implied in the supposition that Christ suffered the penalty of sin. We are at least as much entitled to object to the injustice of His being subjected to such sufferings, if these sufferings were not penal.

His second objection is to the “legal fiction” implied in our being justified through the righteousness of another. But what are we to think of the idea of our author, that Christ though personally sinless, and standing in no legal relation to us, did nevertheless confess our sins before God with a true contrition and a perfect repentance? This is surely a fiction

of the strangest kind. Again and again, in attempting to expound this view, he uses language which almost seems to imply the legal identification of Christ with those whose sins He thus confesses before God. But then he starts aside, as if affrighted at the spectre he himself has raised, and vehemently protests that he means nothing of the kind. Repudiating as monstrous the idea of God imputing the sins of men to Jesus as their appointed representative and surety, he sees no difficulty in Jesus imputing these sins to Himself, feeling the shame of them, suffering the effects of them, confessing them with true repentance to the Father. But if Christ was in no sense responsible for the sins of men, to speak of His confessing them with contrition before the Father is the purest fiction, or the grossest abuse of language of which it is possible to conceive. Macleod Campbell's attempt to obviate this objection to his view only makes the matter worse, as Dr Crawford has very ingeniously shewn in his able work on the Atonement. Endeavouring to vindicate his use of the word "repentance" as applied to the confession of the sins of humanity by Jesus Christ, he says: "That word will have its full meaning in the personal experience of every one who accepts in faith the Atonement as now represented; *for every such individual sinner will add the excepted element of personal consciousness of sin.*" To this Dr Crawford justly objects that "it supposes a *twofold* interchange or combination of penitential elements as taking place between sinners and their Saviour. On the one hand,

that which is lacking in the repentance of sinners, in order to make it 'a full response to the righteous judgment of God on the sins of men,' is held to be supplied by the 'adequate sorrow and contrition with which Christ makes perfect confession of sin on their behalf.' On the other hand, that which is lacking in the Saviour's confession of the sins of men, in order to give it 'all the elements of a proper contrition and repentance on account of them,' is held to be supplied by 'the personal consciousness of sin on the part of every individual sinner who in faith accepts the Atonement.'"¹ To this we would only add, that if it be bad psychology to split up repentance, assigning one part of it to the sinner and another to the Saviour, it is equally bad theology to distribute between them that Atonement which this joint repentance is supposed to constitute.

A fifth theory has been labelled by Dr Bruce "*Salvation by Sample*," a neat and concise title, but one which would probably be repudiated by those to whom it is ascribed. For "salvation by sample" really means salvation by example. The Son of God, it is assumed, took our nature and put Himself in our very circumstances, that He might shew us how we ought to live and how we ought to die, how we may gain a complete victory over sin, fulfil all righteousness, and glorify God in our body and spirit, which

¹ "The Doctrine of Holy Scripture respecting the Atonement," by Thomas J. Crawford, D.D., Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh. Page 324.

are His. A sample is a small portion of anything exhibited as a specimen of the whole. Christ, therefore, if He was a sample of salvation, simply exemplified in His own person that salvation which He desires that all His people should enjoy. He shewed them what it was, and how it could be realised in weak human nature, and so He left us an example that we should follow His steps. This is practically the Socinian view, whereas the view we are now considering, held as it was by some of the Fathers, by Schleiermacher, Irving, Maurice, and others, is of a far higher order. These men do indeed so far coincide with that theory, as to believe that Jesus, in order to save others, first saved Himself.¹ They hold that, taking the human nature with all its infirmities and limitations, and being placed in circumstances in no way specially favourable to a religious life, He fought a good fight against manifold temptations, never swerving from the path of duty, never falling into sin, till He could say with His dying breath, "It is finished." But then they admit that if this were all, if He merely set before us the example of a pure and perfect life, leaving us to follow it as best we may, this could only fill us with despair. There must be some closer link of connection between us and this one perfect Man if He is to be the means of lifting us out of the mire of sin. That link is a certain transcendental, mystical union between us and Christ, the true root of humanity,

¹ Maurice's "Doctrine of Scripture," p. 221. "Theological Essays," pp. 199-203.

the archetypal man. This union is simply recognised by faith, and so we become partakers of His power to overcome temptation from without and to subdue the flesh within, till at last we are pure as He is pure. It is difficult to give a precise name to this theory, in place of the brief and pithy one which we have seen reason to discard. Perhaps it may be called, "*Redemption through the power of the indwelling Christ or Logos.*"

Now, there is much to be said in favour of this view. It rests upon a basis of sound Scriptural statement. It is true that Christ, as our great High Priest,¹ was made in all things like unto His brethren,² that as the Captain of our salvation He was made perfect through sufferings,³ and that it is as our forerunner that He has now entered within the veil. It is also true that such a union is established between Christ and His people as imparts to them His spiritual power, and enables them to enter into the victory that He has won. But the objections to this as a theory of the Atonement are insuperable.

In the first place, those who maintain it are driven by sheer logical necessity to hold that our Lord Jesus Christ had a sinful nature such as we have, though He succeeded in so mastering it that He was never guilty of actual sin. For, if His experience was neither more nor less than ours in germ, or miniature, and if our salvation is simply His fully developed, enacted

¹ Heb. ii. 17.

² Heb. ii. 10.

³ Heb. vi. 20.

on a wider theatre, then the conditions of His struggle and victory must be identical with ours. This they would not be, if there was this enormous difference between us, that He had no original sin. With thorough-going consistency Edward Irving carried out this view to its legitimate conclusion. And a few years ago Mr James Stuart, then a licentiate of the Free Church, published a volume in which he boldly advocated the theory we are now discussing, with all its logical implications, the sinfulness of our Lord's human nature among the rest.¹ But this is a conclusion from which the instincts of the Christian Church have always strongly revolted. And it seems to be contradicted by such passages of Scripture as these, that God sent "His own Son in the *likeness* of sinful flesh,"² that "God made Him *who knew no sin* to be sin on our behalf,"³ that He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,"⁴ that it was said of Him by the angel Gabriel before His birth, "that *holy thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,"⁵ and that He could say on the eve of His conflict with the great enemy, "the Prince of the world cometh: and He hath nothing in Me."⁶

In the second place, this view really evades the whole difficulty connected with the forgiveness of sins, which it is the avowed purpose of Atonement

¹ "Principles of Christianity," Chap. V., by James Stuart, M.A.

² Rom. viii. 3.

³ 2 Cor. v. 21.

⁴ Heb. iv. 15.

⁵ Luke i. 35.

⁶ John xiv. 30.

to meet and obviate. It is a theory, not of the way of pardon, but of the way of purification. Now, pardon must come first. It is impossible for a man to make any progress in the pursuit of holiness while still burdened with a load of unforgiven sin. When the slumbering conscience of a sinner is awakened, the first thing which it does is to confront him with the sins of his past life. But this theory of redemption by mystical union, not, observe, with One who has suffered in our stead, but with One who passed through our experience of temptation, that He might enable us to overcome as He did, entirely ignores the question, "How is our bad past to be forgiven?" It is, therefore, the drama of redemption with the most important part left out. For it is with the question of forgiveness, and not with that of holiness, that the Atonement has in the first instance to do; and no theory of the Atonement is deserving of consideration which fails to throw any light on the way in which our past sins may be blotted out.

A sixth theory is that of *self-sacrifice*. Practically this is the view of Mr Robertson of Brighton, and it was put by him in a very crude and offensive form. The death of Christ, he holds, was a sacrifice in this sense, that He went forward to endure it of His own free will. He knew that this is the law which governs the conflict with evil, that it can be crushed only by suffering from it. He therefore voluntarily "came into collision with the world's evil, and bore the

penalty of that daring. He approached the whirling wheel, and was torn in pieces.”¹ In other words, He died a martyr’s death,—a theory of the Atonement long ago propounded by Socinus. But what connection there was between that death and our redemption, or what assurance Christ had that His martyrdom might not, like many another, be endured in vain, we are not told. It is with the name of Maurice, however, that this view of the Atonement is usually associated. He held it in connection with the “mystical union” theory which we have just been considering. Holding, with Schleiermacher, that Jesus was the archetypal man, the root and ground of human nature, he tells us that He came into the world and led an ideal human life, with the view of delivering us from sin and restoring us to perfect fellowship with God. The essence of that life was self-sacrifice—the surrender of His own will to the will of God—as He says Himself, “Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O God.”² That self-sacrifice reached its climax when He laid down His life upon the Cross. This was a sublime act of self-renunciation on the part of humanity represented in Him who was its root and germ. Now, on the principle laid down by Paul in Rom. xi. 16, “If the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy,” this surrender of His own will by Christ carries with it our deliverance from self-will and all its bitter consequences. How? Because He was our substitute? Because in that

¹ Sermons by Rev. F. W. Robertson, 1st series, pp. 158-164.

² Heb. x. 7.

capacity He lovingly accepted His Father's will both in precept and penalty, and wrought out our redemption? No, that idea is vehemently repelled. How, then, did that ideal life of Christ avail for us? What point of contact is there between it and our lives, that come so far, so immeasurably short of that high standard? Now, it is precisely at this point, where perfect clearness is absolutely indispensable, that Maurice's teaching becomes most obscure. In a sermon upon Rom. iii. 20-27, he admits that the word rendered *propitiation* (*ἱλαστήριον*) would, in any heathen author mean something that has a Godward efficacy, inclining or enabling the Deity to forgive the transgressors of His law. But then he says that, when the Apostle applies this word to a Christian use, he does not merely modify, he inverts its meaning. Here is his version of what the Apostle says: "He affirms that the barrier between God and His creatures is removed freely without money and without price, and that the act of the Son in shedding His blood is the authentic declaration of that removal."¹ Maurice, of course, holds that the hindrances to fellowship with God are all on our part, not on His, that they are—not His holy anger, or the law's righteous curse—but only our ignorance of God and misconception of His character, our needless terror, our unreasonable dislike. If these are the hindrances between us and God, how and when are they removed? The answer to that question is, When we believe, when by

¹ "The Doctrine of Sacrifice," p. 152.

faith we add our Amen to the self-sacrifice of Christ in the name of humanity, when we accept the "authentic declaration" made by the death of Christ that the barrier is removed. Now, here is a marvellous thing indeed. We remove the barrier by believing that it has already been removed. For the barrier between us and God is held to be entirely subjective, and therefore to continue till we surrender our will to God by believing in Jesus Christ. Yet the death of Christ on Calvary eighteen hundred years ago was an authentic declaration that it was then removed! Removed before it existed! Removed before we were born! Ah! is it not plain that you cannot by any such ingenious devices evacuate the word propitiation of its own true and proper meaning. There *was* an obstacle in the way of God's shewing mercy to sinful men that existed long before we came into the world, existed as early as the fall of man, an obstacle which the death of Christ, not as a mere declaration, but as an atoning sacrifice, effectually removed, so that now "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."¹ The hindrances are now indeed on our part alone, and great will be our guilt if we disregard the exhortation, "Be ye reconciled to God."

A seventh theory is that of those who hold that the efficacy of the Atonement is entirely due to this, that it was a *unique manifestation of the love of God to sinful men*. This indeed is a view of the purpose of the

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19.

death of Christ maintained, more or less clearly, by most of those who reject the doctrine of substitution. They all tend to represent it as purely subjective in its design and end, bringing the sinner into a better relation to God by changing his enmity into love, and doing this by a marvellous revelation of the love of his Heavenly Father. Hence the proneness which they show to ignore or minimise the claims of the divine law. Hence, too, the emphasis which they lay upon the universal Fatherhood of God, many of them seeming to hold that the work of the Son and the work of the Spirit were not needed to give us "power to become the sons of God," but only to open our eyes to the fact that we had always been His dear children, if we had only known it. That the gift of His only-begotten Son, and the sufferings which He endured on earth, were a glorious manifestation of the love of God to man who can deny, in view of our Lord's own words, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life,"¹ or those of the beloved disciple, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."² Yes, but mark the words—"to be the propitiation for our sins." A propitiation, then, was needed, not indeed to turn the heart of God toward men, but to enable Him to save them in consistency with all the perfections of His character and all the principles of His government.

¹ John iii. 16.² 1 John iv. 10.

And so great was His love that, when no other sacrifice or offering would have sufficed, He did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Here indeed was love, wondrous love, a love that passeth knowledge. The well-beloved Son, who had been from eternity in the bosom of the Father, was offered up as a sacrifice that sinners might be saved. But if you deny the necessity for such a propitiation, and maintain that without it God might and would have forgiven the repenting sinner, you remove the great motive for this amazing sacrifice, and leave the whole subject shrouded in impenetrable mystery. Why God should in that case have sent His Son into the world, to be despised, rejected, crucified; and why, especially, He should have left Him on the Cross to experience a sense of utter desertion is incapable of any reasonable explanation. And yet it is said that this was done to shew the love of God to man! How the gratuitous infliction of so much undeserved suffering upon His own dear Son was fitted to convince those who were alienated from God and full of prejudice against Him that He was a Being of infinite love we fail to understand. We should have thought that it would have had a precisely opposite effect—that it would have confirmed them in the impression which they had previously formed, that He was hard and unfeeling, capricious and severe. But let it be clearly seen that this severity towards the well-beloved Son was absolutely necessary, in order to the removal of those moral obstacles that stood in the way of our salvation,

and which no mere act of omnipotence could ever have removed, then we get a glimpse of the amazing love of God, in saving sinners such as we, even at the cost of the tears, the agony, the cruel death of His own dear Son.

There are some who have written upon the Atonement with ability and freshness, and in a devout and reverent spirit, whose views it is yet somewhat difficult to grasp, and still more difficult to classify. One of these is the Bishop of Durham, whose praise, in connection both with critical and social questions, is in all the Churches. In his small, but interesting and suggestive, volume of sermons, entitled "The Victory of the Cross," he complains that "the significance of this central fact of our faith has been obscured by the use of modes of exposition which belong to an earlier age." It may be so. But if the Bishop refers to writers of the ordinary evangelical school, as we presume he does, he scarcely does them justice when he says that "where our Lord and His apostles speak of sin, we substitute punishment," where "they represent evil as a barrier which hinders the outflow of divine love upon the guilty; we think of it as that which entails painful retribution." The truth is that, while these writers speak of sin both as entailing on us the curse of the law and as a hindrance to communion with God, Bishop Westcott and those who agree with him dwell exclusively upon the latter, the ethical and not the legal aspect of sin. But it is with the legal aspect that atonement has in the first instance to do.

That must first be dealt with before the ethical side can be reached, and any attempt to sink the question, "How are law and justice to be satisfied and yet the sinner saved?" or even to postpone it to the other question, "How is man to be restored to holiness?" can only issue in serious error, or in ambiguity and confusion.

Of this confusion we have sufficient evidence in the Bishop's volume. At times his statements are all that could be desired, as when he says that Christ "fulfilled in action the law which God had laid down for the being whom He had made in His image";¹ that "He endured in His passion every penalty which the righteousness of God had connected with the sins which He had made His own." "He took to Himself the sin of the race with all its penalties, but so as to contemplate it with the regard of One All-righteous and All-pure." But when we come to examine His utterances more closely, we are disappointed at finding that he shuns the forensic bearing of the death of Christ, and dwells exclusively upon its moral power.² In particular, he warns us that we are not to think of Christ as a substitute for each of His people individually, nor to think of His death as a legal transaction according to which a penalty once inflicted cannot be required again. We are not to suppose that the infinite value of His sufferings depends on His infinite capacity for suffering, or the infinite value of each suffering of a Divine Person. And, on the other hand,

¹ "Victory of the Cross," pp. 61, 68.

² *Ibid.* p. 79.

these sufferings are represented as being simply "a revelation of the Fatherhood of God, who brings back His children to Himself in righteousness and in love. In this sense Christ suffered, knowing the nature of sin, knowing the judgment of God, realising in every pain the healing power of a Father's wisdom. And in this sense the virtue of His passion remains in its eternal power."¹ This is certainly vague and indefinite enough. Yet it is all that Bishop Westcott has to say about the atoning virtue of Christ's passion. What follows has only to do with the sanctifying power of suffering as a discipline from a Father's hand, and the example that Christ has left us of the way in which that suffering should be borne.

Another writer not to be omitted in this brief review is Principal Fairbairn of Mansfield College, Oxford, whose views are brought out in his remarkably interesting book, "Christ in Modern Theology." It would be difficult to give any one descriptive title to his theory, for we seem to hear in it the echoes of Maurice and Bushnell and Macleod Campbell. Thus, with Maurice, he lays such emphasis upon the Fatherhood of God that he practically merges the judicial in the paternal, maintaining that all God's punishments are fatherly chastisements. A judicial government, he says, "is punitive, not remedial," while a paternal government, which he holds God's to be, "is in the true sense remedial in its very penalties."² But

¹ "Victory of the Cross," p. 82.

² "Christ in Modern Theology," p. 438.

is this a matter of fact? Do we find in human history, sacred or profane, that all the penalties inflicted on sinners are intended for their reformation? Are there none that wear the aspect of simple punishment as a warning to others, and for the maintenance of order and the satisfaction of divine justice? Do not such events as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha, the slaughter of the inhabitants of Canaan when the cup of the Amorites was full, and the final punishment of the wicked at the last day, come under this category? If this be so, then is it not more correct to say that God is revealed as standing to His creatures in the twofold relation of Father and Moral Governor? Prior to the entrance of sin there is the most perfect harmony between the two relations, and between the lines of action to which they respectively lead. But sin at once separates them, and throws them into antagonism. This antagonism it was the very object of redemption through Jesus Christ to reduce and reconcile. And, in this connection, what are we to think of the sufferings inflicted on the Redeemer by His own Father, the cup He gave Him to drink, the hidings of His face? That must have been, not paternal chastisement, for He needed none, and was never dearer to the Father than in that awful hour, but judicial punishment, the punishment of His people's sins.

Dr Fairbairn reminds us of Bushnell by the way in which he deals with the justice and law of God, only that instead of a new-fangled distinction between

“law before government” and “instituted government,” he falls back upon the old-fashioned distinction between the Jewish law and the moral law, or universal law of God. Thus he says, “When a Roman jurist, even when he had become a Christian Father, thought of law, it was as known in the schools where he had studied, and in the courts where he had practised; all its associations were judicial, and all its processes forensic, all its judgments aimed at the suppression of crime and the satisfaction of justice by penalties. But when a Jewish scholar who had become a Christian apostle thought of law, it was the moral and ceremonial, the social and sacerdotal system in which he had been instructed as a religion, and as the peculiar revelation granted to his people. There were points indeed where the ideas touched, but these were incidental; while the points where they differed were essential. Hence, if a man reads the Pauline νόμος as if it were the Roman and magisterial *lex*, he will radically misread it, especially in all that concerns its relation to the death of Christ. ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law’; certainly, but this was the law which the Jew loved, and which was thus forever abolished, not the universal law of God. He became ‘a curse for us’; certainly, but under the same law, for by it He was ‘hanged upon a tree.’ But the law that thus judged Him condemned itself; by cursing Him it became accursed. His death was not the vindication, but the condemnation of the law.”¹

¹ “Christ in Modern Theology,” pp. 479, 480.

Was there ever such a travesty of the design and end of the crucifixion of our Lord? Its design—to set us free from the curse of the Jewish law, not the universal law of God! Its end—the law cursing itself in cursing Him; condemning itself in putting Him to death! If this was all that Christ meant to accomplish by His death—to free us from the Jewish law and its curse by abolishing that law—alas for us! Who is to free us from the still more awful curse of God’s universal law—a curse which we have all incurred—a law which shall never be abolished? And how could the law condemn itself by putting Christ to death? The law did not put Christ to death. It had no fault to find with Him; He had obeyed it perfectly. Besides, the law is a mere abstraction; it could not kill. In the death of Christ we may see the hand of God, or the hand of man, or both. So far as it was the act of men, it was done, the Apostle Peter tells us, “by the hands of lawless men.”¹ It was an awful crime, by which they did indeed condemn and curse themselves. But so far as Christ died by the appointment of the Father, “being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” it was a glorious demonstration of divine righteousness, an awful vindication of the divine law. He was “delivered up for our trespasses.”² “God set Him forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by His blood, to shew His righteousness, because of the

¹ Acts ii. 23.

² Rom. iv. 25.

passing over of sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the shewing, I say, of His righteousness at this present season, that He might Himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.”¹ We all know that Paul, though a profound thinker, was free and unfettered in the use of language, not, like our New Testament revisers, always using the same word to denote the same thing. Thus he uses the term “law” to signify sometimes the ceremonial law of the Jews, and sometimes the moral and eternal law of God. The context must in each case determine the sense. But it will be hard indeed to prove that Christ, who came to save both Jew and Gentile, to fulfil all righteousness and to give His life a ransom for many, did nothing by His death but free us from the curse of an obsolete Jewish law. Assuredly this is not proved by the mere circumstance that the apostle, after saying that “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,” adds these words, “for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” The evident purpose of this quotation from the book of Deuteronomy is to show that even in the apparently unimportant matter of the mode of His death it was so ordered that He should be seen to be under a curse.

Again, Dr Fairbairn’s views remind us both of Bushnell and Macleod Campbell, when we find him saying, “The first step in the process of saving

¹ Rom. iii. 25, 26.

from sin is to execute judgment upon it, and so to do it that the judgment, though God's, shall also become, as it were, the sinner's own. . . . Salvation, then, can come only by sin being vanquished, by the surrender of the sinner to God, not of God to sin."¹ We complain of the ambiguity of this language. Does Dr Fairbairn mean by that execution of judgment on sin, which is the first step towards its removal, the infliction of the penalty, either upon the sinner or upon a duly accredited substitute? Certainly not. He means a great act of self-sacrifice on the part of Jesus Christ, the need of which is not very obvious, but which is supposed to express the divine abhorrence of sin, and to lead the sinner in like manner to abhor it.

"If," he goes on to say, "man's relation to sin is to be changed, if the guilty is to be forgiven, it must be on terms that leave him in no doubt as to the nature and desert of his sin."² Very good, we say, that is the very foundation of our doctrine of the substitution and vicarious sufferings of Christ. If such a glorious Being, Himself absolutely sinless though consenting to take the sinner's place, had to drink the bitter cup, to suffer so terrible a penalty, before our guilt could be expiated, it is impossible to exaggerate the evil nature and desert of sin. Dr Fairbairn's conclusion is the very opposite, for he goes on to say, "And so, if God saves man, it is certain that His method will be

¹ "Christ in Modern Theology," p. 481.

² *Ibid.* p. 482.

so to judge sin as to condemn and overcome it more completely than would have been possible by any judicial process, or any system of cumulative penalties." To which we answer: "One thing at a time, if you please. Let us keep everything in its proper place. We are dealing at present with the question of forgiveness. You are dragging in the whole subject of sanctification. We are as anxious as you can be that sin should be condemned and overcome in the sinner's heart, and we agree with you in saying that without this he cannot be saved. But we maintain that the subsequent work of sanctification will not be promoted, but the reverse, by slurring over or huddling up the previous question of satisfying divine justice that sin may be forgiven. It is the inexorable necessity for the infliction of the penalty, even upon One whom it was so hard to punish, that gives us a glimpse of the horrible nature of sin in the sight of God."

Following up the same line of thought, Dr Fairbairn again asserts that "God's judgments are not merely retributory or retaliatory, penal or vindictive, in the judicial sense, but they are corrective, reclamatory, disciplinary. This affects the function of the Atonement; it works in the universe as the embodied judgment of God against sin, but of this judgment as chastening and regenerative, rather than judicial and penal."¹ "It burns into the soul of the

¹ "Christ in Modern Theology," p. 482.

sinner the sense of the evil and the shame of sin, forces him to look at it with God's eyes, to judge it with His conscience, to hate it with His hate—in a word, to change his own attitude to it for God's." We can quite understand this if Christ, when making this Atonement, was receiving in our room the penalty of our sins. Then His sufferings and death were an exact expression of God's sense of the evil of sin and His hatred of it, and we, seeing that, and remembering that it was our sin He bore and our punishment He endured, may well be filled with sorrow and with shame. But this is just what our author denies. He says that it was not the punishment of our sins that Jesus suffered on the Cross. If so, we are at a loss to know why He suffered. Surely it was not a chastening and regenerative judgment that was inflicted on Him. If it be said that the Jews slew Him—well, that was their deed, not ours, and we cannot take home their guilt to ourselves. If it be said that it was on the part of Christ an act of astonishing self-sacrifice for our salvation, then we do well to be grateful to Him, but until we see the connection between that act of self-sacrifice and our sin, we cannot see in it God's judgment on sin, the expression of His hatred towards it.

Again, he says that God "invited man to come and see sin as He saw it, and judge its evil by beholding through the Eternal Son the suffering it cost the Eternal Father."¹ Still, this throws no light on the

¹ "Christ in Modern Theology," p. 484.

reason for the sufferings of the Son, especially for the bitterest element in those sufferings, the sense He had upon the Cross that His God had forsaken Him. But mark what follows. "We may then construe the sufferings and death of Christ as if they were the sacraments, or symbols and seals, of the invisible passion and sacrifice of the Godhead. That is a message they deliver now and will deliver for ever; but it is not their only message. *They are a revelation of sin as well as of God*; they shew it as nothing else could have done." We seem to be getting near the heart and kernel of the matter now, but only to be again utterly disappointed. Hear what he has to say on this crucial point. "And revelation is here judgment; for sin to be discovered is to be condemned. In Christ love and righteousness were incarnate; though hated, He always loved; though wronged, He always obeyed. In Him there was nothing akin to evil, or anything that sin could call its own. But this only made two things the more manifest—the hatefulness of sin to the good, and the hate of sin for the good. In the very degree that Christ's soul was pure He was sensitive to the shame of evil; its very shadow was to Him misery; and it is a thing man cannot forget that the Sinless bears as His distinguishing name 'the Man of Sorrows.' But this purity of His was the very thing sin could not forgive; it saw Him only to feel, 'Here is a sacrifice I must offer.' And it offered Him, without shame on its own part, but with such feeling and shrinking on His part,

that He prayed, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass.' But it could not be allowed to pass, for it was necessary to the saving of man that the inmost essence of sin should be revealed. And so, with the sanction and by the act of those, who by misrepresenting religion most represented sin, He was sacrificed. The place was the Holy City; the time was the morrow of the great feast; the spectators who approved were the people gathered for the festival. And so they crucified Him, making Him an offering and a sacrifice. In His soul He carried the sins of men, and for their sins He died."

What an utterly unsatisfactory account of the death of Christ in relation to human sin! The Son of God was sent into the world to be rejected and despised, scourged, spat upon, crucified, not as the substitute of sinners—oh, no! that would have been unjust—but that the inmost essence of sin might be revealed. Was there then no injustice in giving up the inoffensive, holy Jesus, who is assumed to have had no responsibility for human sin, to the rage of men and devils, merely to show that sin in its darkest colours? And if this was the design of His sufferings, how are we to account for the hidings of His Father's face, the bitterest drop in the cup He had to drink? Sin, we are told, as soon as it saw the sinless One, said, "Here is a sacrifice that I must offer." Have these words any meaning? Why should sin offer any sacrifice? And to whom was it to be offered? The word sacrifice ought not to have been used in such a connection, and we believe it never would have been so used,

except for a desire to keep up the appearance of being in harmony with the doctrine of the Scriptures and of the Church Catholic on this subject. "And it offered Him." Two pages before we are told that it was "the law" that cursed and condemned the Christ. Here it is sin that is said to have offered Him up as a sacrifice. Strange confederates these—the law of God and the sin of man—conspiring to kill the Holy One of God. But, apart from that, we thought that it had been Christ, as the great High Priest, that offered up Himself.¹ According to Dr Fairbairn, Sin was the High Priest and Christ only the victim, offered up we cannot tell to whom, and for no other reason than that He was too good to be allowed to live! Nor does it mend the matter when he goes on to change the abstract for the concrete, sin for the Jewish priests headed by their chief. It is true they crucified Him, but it is an unwarrantable abuse of language to say that "*they* made Him an offering and a sacrifice."

We have dwelt upon the views of Principal Fairbairn at some length, not because of their greater intrinsic plausibility, but because they are among the latest utterances that have appeared in this country on the subject, because they are found in a book of remarkable interest and value, and because the esteemed author holds a deservedly high place among the theologians of the day.

It would lead us too far afield to enter on a criticism of the views of Continental writers on the

¹ Heb. vii. 27 ; ix. 26.

Atonement. Nor is it needful that we should, for in so far as they differ from those already discussed, they have even less verisimilitude about them. A few words may be said with reference to Ritschl,¹ whose influence is so powerful in Germany at the present day—an influence, as it seems to us, due not to the soundness of his opinions, but to the strong personality of the man, and the impression he was able to make upon a band of able and enthusiastic disciples. To enter fully on the consideration of his views would require a preliminary discussion of the metaphysic on which his doctrine of redemption is grounded. This would here be out of place, and apart from it his view does not materially differ from some of those which we have already considered. In particular, Ritschl has carried the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God, in the sense in which it is held by Maurice and Fairbairn, to its logical conclusion, its true landing-place. He holds that in the reconciliation between God and man nothing is needed on God's part, for He is unchangeable love, even in the presence of human sin. It is we that must quit our distance from God, and instead of fearing Him, trust His fatherly love. This is to be brought about not by expiation or satisfaction. That would imply that God was displeased with us—that there was some objective guilt to be removed

¹ Ritschl's "Die Christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung," pp. 75-120. See also "Dorner's System of Scripture Doctrine," pp. 60-71. Orr's Kerr Lecture, pp. 75-120.

—which he holds to be the very error or delusion from which we need to be delivered. Christianity proves itself to be the redeeming religion by revealing God as Father, instead of Lawgiver and Judge, one who knows nothing of judicial anger and punishment. All this naturally follows from his view of sin on the one hand, as being little more than ignorance and defect, demanding loving help rather than judicial punishment, and of God on the other hand, as unchangeable Love, so that it is impossible for Him to be angry with or to punish any of His intelligent creatures. This is a doctrine almost too extravagant to stand in need of refutation. It is a kind of optimism which, we should imagine, no man could believe, except by steadily shutting his eyes to many of the obvious facts of history, and many of the plainest statements of the Word of God.

In attempting to shew that none of those alternative theories which have been suggested can take the place of that of substitution, we are very far indeed from saying that they do not contain important elements of truth. The works of God are manifold, so that we need not wonder that redemption, the greatest of them all, should have many different aspects. Indeed, we are free to confess that preachers of the evangelical school, impressed with a deep sense of the transcendent importance of holding up before the minds of men the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, satisfactory at once to divine justice and to the human conscience, have sometimes suffered this one

aspect of that wonderful event to overshadow every other. This has given a hardness and a meagreness to their teaching which has made it unattractive, if not positively forbidding. It has presented the "great mystery of godliness" too exclusively from a legal point of view, as a scheme designed to remove certain preliminary difficulties which stood in the way of the sinner's salvation. It is that, but it is much more. It is the supreme effort of divine love put forth for the purpose of recovering a lost world, and enfolding it in the embrace of the everlasting arms. As such it may be regarded from many points of view, each of them the complement of all the rest. We must endeavour to find room for all of them in our doctrine of the Cross. This will amplify and enrich our conceptions of the Saviour's passion, so that it will move our heart to its lowest depths, and influence our life at every point. All that we claim is that the doctrine of substitution shall have the first and fundamental place, and then all the others will group themselves naturally around it.

Then we shall be able to see how great the ransom was, when we were redeemed not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Then we can understand how Jesus, our appointed substitute, entered by sympathy into all our sorrows, and even into all our sins, feeling the burden and the shame of them, and confessing them before the Father. Then we can

cordially welcome the thought of that deep mystical union which subsists between Him and all the members of His body. And then we can see in the Cross a supreme example of self-sacrifice, a conclusive demonstration of God's righteousness, a glorious revelation of His love.

One impression made upon us by the careful study of the authors we have been criticising is, that much of their antipathy to the evangelical doctrine of the Atonement arises from the erroneous conceptions of it which they have formed. It may not, therefore, be out of place to conclude this review of the futile attempts which they have made to supersede that obnoxious doctrine, and to put a better in its stead, by adding the following sentences from the late Dr Candlish's *Examination of Maurice's Theological Essays*, as an admirable and concise statement of what that doctrine does, and what it does not imply (pp. 229-231):—

“We do not hold that Christ in any sense changed the will of the Father. We do not hold that the Atonement moved the Father to love the world, but that the Father so loved the world as to provide the Atonement. We do not admit the substitution of Christ in the room of the guilty to be artificial. We believe it to be real and actual. We believe it to be the gracious appointment of the sovereign will of God. And we believe that because Christ is the actual representative of men, He is, on that very account, qualified to be their substitute. We do not put

Christ's endurance of inconceivable sufferings as our substitute instead of His entering into our actual miseries and bearing our griefs. We believe both. We believe in the sympathy of Christ with us, as well as in the substitution of Christ for us ; and we believe the sympathy to be all the more tender and true on account of the substitution. We do not believe that He rescued men out of the hand of God by paying a penalty to Him ; but as little do we believe that He rescued them out of the power of an enemy by yielding to his power. We believe that He did not yield to the enemy's power, but triumphed over it. He yielded to death, not because the enemy had any power over Him, but because the Father gave Him the cup to drink. We do not put 'penalty for sin' instead of 'sin' in the passage about the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. But we ask what persons accustomed to the sacrificial language and ideas of the Old Testament would understand by that phrase. And we ask what that other passage means :—'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.' We do not suppose that Christ has destroyed the connection between sin and death. We hold that He has ratified and confirmed it more emphatically than if all sinners perished. The Holy One, taking the responsibility—the guilt—of our sin upon Himself, accepted the wages of sin, which is death. We do not say that the law must execute itself. The Lawgiver must execute His own law ; and it is for Him to judge if,

in any instance, a substitute may stand for the guilty. We do not represent God as satisfied by the punishment of sin. We speak, indeed, of the justice of God, or His holy law being satisfied,—its claims being met,—its violated majesty being vindicated,—when sin is punished. But this is a very different thing from representing God as feeling a personal satisfaction in punishing sin ; which is clearly what the author means to ascribe to us. We hold strongly that God can be satisfied only when He beholds His own image in man, as He did at first, and in Christ Jesus does again. We believe, finally, that the death of Christ is a sacrifice both because it is the entire surrender of the whole spirit and body to God, and also because this surrender implied that ‘He bore our sins in His own person on the cross.’ We believe that it is not a sacrifice of man to God, but a sacrifice for man ;—the sacrifice, the vicarious and expiatory suffering of the representative of man, the substitute for man,—the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all,—who gave His life a ransom for the many.”

IV.

THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS AND OF LAYING ON OF HANDS.

THE words which form the title of this paper are found in the very heart of what purports to be a rapid enumeration of "the first principles of the doctrine of Christ."¹ It might therefore be naturally expected that we should attempt some exposition of the two particulars selected, shewing their relation to the rest, and their title to a fundamental place in the fabric of the Christian faith. Our object, however, is a much narrower one than that. We propose simply to inquire, as a matter of exegesis, how many elementary truths are here indicated, and what they are, and with a view to this to examine somewhat closely the words which form our title, and in which, unquestionably, the crux of the passage lies. If it be thought that such a theme is too limited in its scope to possess much interest, or to be worthy of a very full consideration, our answer is—*first*, that the difficulty of the subject appears from the great variety and the unsatisfactory nature of the views taken by the commentators, no one of them being satisfied with any previous effort at interpretation; and, *second*, that the

¹ Heb. vi. 1, 2.

explanation which we venture to propose, and which obviates all the difficulties with which these views are encumbered, has not been suggested by any previous writer with whose works we are acquainted.

First, then, let us look at the interpretation given of this confessedly difficult passage by those who have made a special study of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the Revised Version the words run thus: "Wherefore, let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." Dr Owen,¹ in his admirable and exhaustive, though somewhat prolix commentary on this Epistle, says, that "by some these principles of the Christian faith are held to be six in number, by some seven, by some four, while some even reduce them to three." At first sight, six appear to be enumerated, but they may be increased to seven by regarding βαπτισμῶν, διδασχῆς, as two distinct particulars, and translating thus, "baptisms, teaching, and laying on of hands"; or they may be reduced to four by throwing "the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands" into a parenthesis, a construction preferred by two such authorities as Calvin and Owen. But the great mass of commentators regard the particulars here enumerated as six in number, "three pairs of fundamentals," as Delitzsch calls them. In the

¹ Owen on Hebrews, Dr Goold's edition, p. 17.

language of Dr Davidson,¹ "they fall into three groups, each containing a pair of related subjects." The simplicity and symmetry of this arrangement have naturally procured for it a very general acceptance. It is when we come to details that serious difficulties arise.

Delitzsch² holds that of these six there are four points of doctrine preceded by two features of the Christian life. This he does on the ground that διδασχῆς does not precede and govern μετανοίας, the first particular, but only βαπτισμῶν, the third; so that the sacred writer is here telling us what we ought no longer to have to *do* and to *learn*. As if he had said — "We must advance in the Christian life from faith and repentance to love and good works, and we must get beyond instruction in baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection and judgment, and proceed to the higher mysteries of the faith." The great, we may say the insuperable, objection to this view is, that the preceding context shews that the writer is here speaking of doctrine, not of practice, throughout. He is chiding the Hebrew Christians for their slowness to learn. They must cease to linger over the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God. Leaving the milk diet of elementary truth behind, they must learn to feed upon the solid food of full-grown men. This is the only sense in which we are ever to have done

¹ Bible Handbooks, "Epistle to the Hebrews," p. 118, by Professor A. B. Davidson, D.D., LL.D. T. & T. Clark.

² Delitzsch on Hebrews, Vol. I., p. 269. T. & T. Clark.

with repentance and faith. As Christian graces we must exercise them every day we live. As Christian doctrines we ought not always to be learning them, but, having laid them as a foundation, we ought to build upon them the entire structure of evangelical belief. Let it, therefore, be carefully noted that we are bound to find some reason for the introduction of the word $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\chi\eta\varsigma$, not at the beginning of the enumeration of fundamental points, but after the mention of the first pair, and that this explanation, proposed by Delitzsch, Lünemann, and Alford, completely breaks down.¹

This difficulty, of course, disappears if, with Erasmus, Luther, and others, we make $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\chi\eta\varsigma$ an inde-

¹ Dr Bruce, in one of a series of valuable papers on the Epistle to the Hebrews, which appeared in the *Expositor* in 1889, indicates a leaning towards this view of Dr Delitzsch. He gives it an air of plausibility by what is certainly a very free translation, "not laying again a foundation for repentance and faith, consisting in instruction concerning baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection and judgment." And he claims that the reading $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\chi\eta\nu$, adopted by Westcott and Hort, favours this rendering, by suggesting that the four things following form the foundation of repentance and faith. But is it not in the highest degree improbable that, when the writer's complaint was that the Hebrew Christians were lingering at the first principles of Christian doctrine instead of advancing to higher themes, he should begin by exhorting them not to lay again a foundation of *repentance* and *faith*, if he meant them to understand that these were not the foundation but the superstructure? They would have been sure to misapprehend his meaning. Besides, does not every one instinctively feel that repentance and faith really are the most elementary and fundamental of all the particulars here enumerated, and that it is altogether an inversion of the natural order of things to represent them as resting on the foundation of any teaching about washings and laying on of hands? Of the reading $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\chi\eta\nu$, preferred by Westcott and Hort, we shall have occasion afterwards to speak.

pendent particular, signifying either catechetical instruction, or the substance of the teaching thus imparted. But it has always been felt that this destroys the symmetry and balance of the sentence, and introduces a point quite disparate from all the rest. The act of teaching cannot be a part of the doctrinal foundation of Christianity, rather it is the laying of that foundation in the minds of men. And the substance of catechetical teaching would not be mentioned as one of the fundamentals, since it would certainly embrace them all. This interpretation accordingly has met with little favour. Another way of avoiding the difficulty is that of Bengel and Winer, who would take the words as they stand in the original, and translate them, "baptisms of doctrine," to denote Christian baptism, which was always associated with teaching, according to our Lord's injunction (Matt. xxviii. 19) βαπτίζοντες, . . . διδάσκοντες. But this will not do, for teaching was quite as much associated with Jewish as with Christian baptism, so that the latter would never have been distinguished from the former by the clumsy and inappropriate expression "baptisms of doctrine." Still another way for accounting for the position of διδάχης is that of Calvin¹ and Owen,² who hold that there are only four fundamental points of doctrine here enumerated, and that the writer throws in parenthetically, between the first pair and the last, the statement that these were the things currently

¹ Calvin on Hebrews, English Translation, p. 133.

² Owen on Hebrews, *in loc.* p. 18.

taught to those who received baptism and laying on of hands. This view certainly explains the position of *διδαχῆς* better than any we have yet considered. Its weak point will afterwards appear.

Leaving out of consideration for the moment these two questions, whether we have here three pairs of fundamental points enumerated or two with a parenthesis between, and why, if there are three pairs, the words "doctrine of" do not precede them all, let us look at these points a little more closely in detail. Little need be said of the first two, "repentance from dead works and faith toward God," for these are confessedly elementary truths that lie at the very threshold of Christian doctrine. The writer of the Epistle is throwing no disparagement upon their importance when he declares that he will not for ever dwell upon them. It is just such a protest as a faithful pastor might make at the present day against a proposal made by some of his people that he should preach nothing but evangelistic sermons. The expression "repentance from dead works" is peculiar, occurring nowhere else in Scripture. Various views have been taken of its meaning. Some regard it as denoting sinful works, since we are said to be "dead in trespasses and sins"; some, works that issue in death; some, works devoid of life and power, as we read of a "dead faith"; some, works belonging to the sphere of that which is separate from God, the sphere of death; and some, works that pollute, like the touch of a dead body. Almost any of these interpretations would be

legitimate enough, if we found the words in an isolated position. Which of them is most appropriate to the context, and most likely to have been in the writer's mind, we shall afterwards be in better circumstances to decide. Of the second particular, "faith toward God," we need only say that its more exact meaning is "faith upon God," and that commentators are agreed that it is not to be understood as distinct from but rather as inclusive of faith in Jesus Christ, agreeably to our Lord's own words, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." It is indeed necessary to assume this, otherwise we should have to face the inexplicable fact that in a summary of the elements of Christian doctrine there is no reference to Christ.

We now come to the chief difficulty of this passage—*βαπτισμῶν διδαχῆς*—the great stumbling-block on which, as it appears to us, all previous interpretations have broken down. We may set aside at once the views of those who make "doctrine" or "teaching" a separate particular, or who translate the words in the order in which they stand in the original, "baptisms of doctrine." It has been justly observed by Lünemann¹ that *βαπτισμῶν* is placed before *διδαχῆς* because the emphasis rests upon it, and that an analogon is already afforded in this very Epistle (ii. 4), by the *πνεύματος ἁγίου μερισμοῖς*. And Alford,² when commenting on the clause which follows, says "it is

¹ Meyer's "Critical Commentary." Lünemann on Hebrews, p. 230. Translation. T. & T. Clark.

² Alford's Greek Testament, Vol. IV., p. 106.

almost necessary on account of the transposed place of βαπτισμῶν, and the coupling by τε, to understand ἐπιθέσεώς τε as genitive after διδαχῆς and not after θεμέλιον." This is a very important statement, as explaining that transposition of the words which has caused some trouble to the commentators, and also throwing light upon the use of τε rather than καί in this clause, a point we shall afterwards have occasion to consider. But, taking the words as they stand in our English translations, Authorised or Revised, "the doctrine" or "teaching of baptisms," we are immediately confronted with a twofold difficulty—*first*, that even if the translation "baptisms" be allowed, we must account for the use of the plural number; and *second*, that this translation is scarcely admissible, because it is not the sense in which βαπτισμός is ever used in the New Testament.

Let us look at the way in which these difficulties have been dealt with. As to the use of the plural number, some have supposed that there is a reference to trine immersion; but that practice did not originate till long after the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. Calvin sees in the word an allusion to stated times of baptism, twice or thrice a year; but this practice also was of later origin. Some think that the plural is here put for the singular, which is cutting the knot with a vengeance. Some imagine a reference to the threefold baptism of water, of the Spirit, and of affliction (fluminis, flaminis, sanguinis), but this is very

fanciful. Gonge¹ actually says—and it shews the shifts to which an intelligent and honest interpreter may be driven—"Baptism may here synecdochically be put for both sacraments; and to shew that the Lord's Supper is included under the sacrament of baptism, the plural number, *baptisms*, is used"! Some, with Theodoret, Beza, and Owen, hold that the plural is employed because, though the ordinance was one, many persons were baptised; but what had the number of the baptised to do with the question of baptism as a doctrine? Grotius, Whitby, and Reuss think that the sacred writer refers to the outward baptism of water and the inward baptism of the Holy Ghost. But the great majority of recent commentators regard the word as designed to include within it the various washings which were under the law, the baptism of John, and Christian baptism, holding that the nature of these, their distinctness from each other and their mutual relations, would naturally be one of the fundamental and primary topics of teaching to the Hebrew converts.

This last view is certainly less open to objection than any of the others, for it not only gives a feasible explanation of the use of the plural number, but allows of the correct translation of the word βαπτισμῶν. The term invariably used in the New Testament to denote Christian baptism is βάπτισμα. The word βαπτισμός, which is here used, occurs only in two other places; in Mark vii. 4, where it refers to the Pharisaic custom

¹ Gonge on Hebrews, Vol. II., p. 7. Nichol's edition.

of washing cups and pots and brazen vessels ; and in Hebrews ix. 10, where it refers to the many washings required by the law of Moses. We are bound, on every principle of sound exegesis, to give it the same meaning here. Archdeacon Farrar accordingly very properly translates the phrase, " doctrine of ablutions." We must, therefore, summarily dismiss all those interpretations which make it refer to Christian baptism exclusively, such as that which supposes the plural form to contain an allusion to the number of persons baptised, or that which explains it as pointing to the baptism of water and of the Holy Ghost.

The only view yet suggested which will at all harmonise with the true rendering of the word βαπτισμῶν is that supported by Bleek, Tholuck, Bloomfield, Delitzsch, Riehm, Lünemann, Alford, and others, that it refers to Christian baptism, along with the Jewish lustrations and the baptism of John. But how unlikely that this should have a place among the first principles of the faith ! Such a place might be accorded to the initiatory sacrament of baptism ; and hence so many have insisted on reading this into the passage, in defiance of the Greek. But if the word here used compels us to include other washings along with baptism, the difficulty is to see how a question so abstruse and of such secondary importance as that of the relation subsisting between these different ablutions could be an elementary principle of the Christian faith. It seems very obvious that, if those principles are to be reduced to so small a number as four or even six,

none must be included in the list which are not characterised by simplicity, permanent interest, and practical importance. But the question of the relation of Christian baptism to the baptism of John, or to the Jewish baptism of proselytes, or to the "divers washings" of the Mosaic law, is not simple and elementary, but difficult and doubtful. Besides, it has little interest for us, and no practical importance. All this makes it very unlikely that it should have been put among the six foundation principles of Christianity.

Immediately after "the doctrine of ablutions" comes the doctrine of the "laying on of hands." The interpretation of the latter depends upon the sense in which we understand the former. Accordingly, we find that commentators, having with one consent agreed on referring the one either entirely or chiefly to Christian baptism, naturally see in the other a reference to the apostolic practice of imposition of hands. The four purposes that were served by the laying on of hands are thus enumerated by Dr Owen—1. Authoritative benediction; 2. Healing of diseases; 3. Setting men apart to the ministry; and 4. Collation of supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost on those who were baptised (Acts viii. 17; xix. 6).¹ It is not likely that the laying on of hands with a view to benediction, healing, or ordination is here meant. It would be strange indeed to find any of these in such a brief summary of the elements of the Christian faith. Therefore it can only be the last—the laying on of

¹ Owen on Hebrews, p. 58.

apostolic hands with a view to the communication of spiritual gifts. And as this took place after persons were baptised, so it here naturally follows the doctrine of baptisms, or washings. Those Churches in which the ceremony of confirmation is practised, naturally find in these words a strong corroboration of their belief and custom. But, without entering on the question whether this imposition of hands was a peculiarity of apostolic times or designed to be an abiding ordinance in the Church, it is difficult to see why it should be elevated to so high a position as to take rank among the six fundamentals. Besides, this laying on of hands is not here connected with Christian baptism, but with a "doctrine of washings" or baptisms, whatever that may mean. And finally, we must not forget that another serious objection to this view of the imposition of hands is this: that it suggests no proper answer to the question why διδαχῆς is inserted where it is and not before repentance and faith.

We may here return for a moment to the consideration of the view of the passage taken by Calvin and Owen. As we have seen, they believe that there are only four fundamental points of doctrine here enumerated, repentance and faith, resurrection, and judgment, and that the sacred writer throws in parenthetically the statement that these were the elementary truths usually taught to those who received baptism and laying on of hands. This has the merit of obviating the two great difficulties with which, as we have just

seen, the ordinary view is embarrassed. It does not represent the doctrine of washings and laying on of hands as ranking among the fundamental doctrines, and it gives a good reason for the introduction of the word διδαχῆς at the point where it occurs. But it has these serious drawbacks, which have prevented its general acceptance. In the first place, it takes βαπτισμῶν to refer distinctively to Christian baptism. In the second place, it can give no good reason for that word being in the plural number. And in the third place, even if we were to overlook these difficulties, the phrase "the doctrine of baptisms" could not be naturally understood to mean the doctrine taught at baptism, or to those who were baptised.

Having now considered all the views of any importance which, so far as we are aware, have been taken of this perplexing passage, let us see if we cannot find an interpretation which will prove itself to be the true key by fitting all the wards of this intricate lock; yielding a satisfactory sense to all the different clauses, while avoiding the difficulties in which previous interpretations are involved. "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works." There is no question as to this first particular. Repentance from dead works—*i.e.*, the duty of turning away with grief and hatred from evil and defiling deeds—is obviously a fundamental point of Christian doctrine. So also is the next,

“faith toward or upon (ἐπὶ) God.” We have only to look at the eleventh chapter, and indeed at the general strain of the whole Epistle, to see that in the estimation of the writer faith in God is quite as essential as repentance. These two Christian graces are inseparably connected. They are of co-ordinate importance, standing on the same level, and so they are here united by the strong conjunction καί. But now, at this point, there is a break, indicated both by the absence of a connecting particle, and by the interjection of the word διδαχῆς. The clauses, literally rendered and properly punctuated, would read thus: “Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith upon God (the teaching of washings and of laying on of hands), and of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment.” This arrangement of the clauses, obviously suggested if not imperatively required by the omission of a conjunction after “faith upon God,” and the insertion of the word διδαχῆς instead, clearly brings out this, that the middle clause, “the teaching of washings and of laying on of hands,” is in apposition to what goes before and epexegetical of its meaning. It is a statement thrown in by the way, to the effect that repentance and faith are the teaching of washings and of laying on of hands. We have seen already that the washings here referred to most naturally mean not baptisms, the word never being used in that sense in all New Testament Scripture, but the “divers washings”

“imposed” by the law of Moses on the Jewish people “until the time of reformation” (Heb. ix. 10). It goes without saying that the writer of this Epistle was ever on the watch for opportunities of bringing out the fact that in the Gospel we have the fulfilment of the figures of the law. Accordingly, having mentioned repentance from dead works and faith on God as fundamental things in Christianity, he cannot refrain from embracing the opportunity of pointing out in passing the two legal rites by which they were strikingly set forth. We say the two legal rites, for if we must hold that βαπτισμῶν means the ablutions prescribed under the law, and not baptism, whether Jewish, Johannean, or Christian, then we must find a similar reference in the ἐπιθέσεως χειρῶν. Had these words been found in another connection they might have meant the laying on of apostolic hands, with a view to the bestowal of spiritual gifts, or the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, to set apart a brother for some special office or work. But here they must, like βαπτισμῶν, refer to some Old Testament rite or custom. The word διδαχῆς, like the switch in the hand of a railway pointsman, has shunted us off the main line of New Testament verities to the siding of Old Testament signs or symbols, and we do not return to the main line till we come to “the resurrection of the dead.” And what that Old Testament rite was the sacred writer here enables us with almost perfect certainty to determine. For he tells us that re-

penitance from dead works was the thing taught by the washings prescribed as a remedy for ceremonial defilement — notably for that which was contracted by contact with the dead.¹ Is not this implied in the language of the prophet Jeremiah: "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" The washing of the body was the

¹ Num. xix. 7, 8, 10, 18, 19. It may be objected that βαπτισμῶν διδασχῆς does not naturally mean, the doctrine taught by washings, but rather, the doctrine regarding washings. We do not deny that the phrase is susceptible of this meaning. But the rendering we have given is at least as natural, and that is sufficient to entitle us to adopt it. Further, it is more agreeable to New Testament usage than the other, for wherever we find a noun in the genitive following διδασχῆ, it denotes the teacher, not the thing taught. The "doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. xvi. 12) was the doctrine taught by them. The "apostles' doctrine" (Acts ii. 42) was the doctrine which the apostles taught. The "doctrine of Balaam" (Rev. ii. 14) is expressly defined to be the infamous counsel which he gave to Balak with the view of ensnaring Israel into sin. According to all these analogies, "the doctrine of washings" means the thing which these washings taught. Had the author of this Epistle meant to say, the doctrine regarding washings, he would probably have written, περὶ βαπτισμῶν διδασχῆς. Nor is this affected by the circumstance that the cases cited have reference to *persons*. Of course a teacher is usually a person. But might not a rhetorical writer, which the author of this Epistle certainly was, personify a rite or institution and put it in the genitive after διδασχῆς, to indicate that such and such a thing is the doctrine which that rite or institution was designed to teach? A learned friend objects to this, that "it seems pedantic in such a passage to stop to inform the reader that the duty of repentance and faith was what was inculcated by the Old Testament rites of purification and imposition of hands in sacrifice." This is a very subjective criticism of comparatively little weight as against the formidable difficulties attaching to every other view. Many will be of opinion that such a side-light thrown on Christian doctrines from Jewish rites is quite after the manner of the writer, and quite in keeping with the purpose of the Epistle.

outward symbol of the washing of the heart, and that is manifestly repentance. In like manner the writer of this Epistle tells us that "faith on God" was the thing taught by the laying on of hands. Now, the only laying on of hands that could well be regarded as symbolical of faith is that which was required of those who came to offer up an animal in sacrifice to God. Before the victim was slain, the offerer was to lay his hand upon its head, that it might "be accepted for him, to make atonement for him." That is to say, this action signified the transfer of guilt and punishment to a substitute, which, according to the teaching of the Apostle Paul, is the very function of justifying faith. Dr Watts's well-known lines will readily suggest themselves—

"My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While as a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

This is very graphically brought out in the account given in Lev. xvi. of the proceedings of the great Day of Atonement, to which, as the typical case of laying on of hands, it is probable that the passage under consideration especially refers. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands (*καὶ ἐπιθήσει Ἀαρὼν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ κ.τ.λ.*) upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into

the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited."

It may, however, be objected that it is doubtful whether the act of the High Priest, or of the Israelite, offering a sacrifice would be very naturally suggested, even to Jewish readers, by the words ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν, and that there is no obvious analogy between that act and "faith upon God." In answer to this we frankly admit that, if the words ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν had stood alone, or in some very different connection, it might have been more natural to take them in the current New Testament sense, as referring to the practice of imposition of hands by apostles or presbyters. But the doctrine of washings and the doctrine of laying on of hands are here so closely connected that, if the one clause means that the thing taught by the Old Testament washings was repentance, the other can only mean that the thing taught by laying on of hands was faith in God. If we have succeeded in proving that this is the only proper sense that can here be put upon the first clause, then we are bound to find in the second some other Old Testament rite, and one that in some way symbolises faith as βαπτισμῶν does repentance. And if so, the only laying on of hands that one can reasonably think of is the one that is here suggested. Considering that the ceremony was enacted by the High Priest every year, and much more frequently by private worshippers, when they brought their offerings to the altar, there is no improbability in the idea that this act would at once occur to

Hebrew Christians. Are we not apt to forget that Greek was to them a living language, so that "laying on of hands" would naturally suggest to them *the thing* with which they had been all their lives familiar? They would not require, as we might, to consult a concordance in order to see how *the phrase* was most commonly used. It is true that the spiritual meaning of that rite, as representing faith, is not so transparently obvious as that of the washings. For that very reason the writer may have deliberately given it the second place, the more simple figure drawing after it the more obscure. Indeed, we would almost say that the use of the particle *τε* rather than the stronger *καί* has the effect of bringing it in as a sort of pendicle to the other clause.

"Faith upon God" must in this connection mean faith on God as revealed in Christ, or on God's testimony regarding Christ, otherwise we should have the strange anomaly of a list of the fundamentals of Christian doctrine without a single reference to Christ. Let it not be supposed that we are driven to maintain this by the exigencies of the interpretation we are at present advocating. It is maintained by commentators who never dreamed of the laying on of hands having any reference to faith in Christ. Thus Delitzsch says: "It is purposely designated as *πίστις ἐπὶ Θεόν*; for faith in God, the God of salvation, is not distinct from, but inclusive of, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. So John xiv. 1, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in

Me'—*i.e.*, 'Remain united, as with God the invisible by faith, so also with Me, when I shall have returned to Him, and ye see Me no more.' In view of the scrupulous persistence of Judaism in the exclusive dogma of the unity of God, it was specially necessary to insist on this point of *πίστις ἐπὶ Θεόν*, in reasoning with Jewish Christians not yet firmly grounded in the faith."

Our position, to put it briefly, is this: "The doctrine of washings" finds its precise counterpart in "repentance from dead works." That again is so linked to the "laying on of hands" that we must understand this last to be some Old Testament rite, and one that embodies "faith on God." What can that be but the laying on of the hands of the priest, or the offerer, upon the victim's head, which implied his faith in God who had appointed this as the way in which sin repented of was to be forgiven. "Faith in God" cannot here mean a mere theistic belief—(1) Because then it should have preceded repentance, "for he that cometh to God (as a penitent does) must believe that He is"; and (2) because that would be to exclude Christ altogether from this summary of Christian doctrine. It obviously means, in the present connection, that faith in God as a forgiving God which properly follows true repentance. And was not that symbolically expressed by the High Priest, when, after confessing Israel's sin, he laid both his hands upon the live goat, and sent it away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness, believing that it

bore away these sins, at least in type or symbol, to a land not inhabited ?

And now that we have ascertained the true meaning of these two clauses, let us look back for a moment and see if they do not reflect some light on one of the previous particulars. "Repentance from dead works" is certainly an unusual expression. But it is characteristic of the writer of this Epistle. The only other place in Scripture where the words "dead works" are found is in the fourteenth verse of the 9th chapter—"For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" We know that water mingled with the ashes of an heifer was used to purify those who had contracted ceremonial defilement by touching the dead (Num. xix. 14-20). In like manner the blood of Christ is said to purge our consciences from dead works. Here the illustration compels us to regard "dead" as signifying "defiling" works, that impart moral defilement to the conscience, just as contact with a dead body used to convey the taint of ceremonial defilement to the Israelite under the law. If so, why should we not attach the same meaning to the expression in this the only other place where it occurs, especially when we consider that it is found in the same Epistle, and in a connection which shews that

the Old Testament ceremonial was present to the writer's mind?

The sacred writer, having mentioned faith and repentance, the two fundamental graces, or exercises of soul, by which we enter into the kingdom of God and obtain salvation here on earth, and having indicated in passing the two Mosaic rites in which they were visibly embodied, goes on to mention as two other first principles of the doctrine of Christ, the final development of that kingdom, and the full realisation of that salvation at the end of the world. "The resurrection of the dead," whatever hints of it there may have been in the Pagan mythology and the prophetic Scriptures, was essentially a Christian doctrine. And it is entitled to the place which it here holds among the elementary truths of the Gospel, both on account of its connection with the resurrection of Christ, and its bearing on the comfort and happiness of the people of God. "Eternal judgment," which shall immediately follow the resurrection of the dead, may well be put upon the same footing with it, as a complementary truth of the first importance. For then the Judge shall pronounce the final sentence upon the quick and dead. Then shall the wicked be severed from among the just, and the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. To quote the language of Dr Bruce—"Though resurrection and judgment, as events, come at the end of the Christian's career, the doctrine concerning them comes appropriately at the beginning, as fitted to

inspire an awe and a hope which are the most powerful motives to holiness."

These two "principles," like the previous two, are co-ordinated by being linked together by the conjunction *καί*: ἀναστάσεώς τε νεκρῶν, καὶ κριματός αἰώνιος. It may be asked, Why are not the second and third of the four fundamentals—faith and the resurrection—in like manner co-ordinated by *καί*? The answer is twofold. In the first place, the train of thought has been interrupted by the digression, or parenthesis, regarding washings and laying on of hands, so suitable in an Epistle to the Hebrews, so much in keeping with the writer's aim throughout. This has separated the second and third of these particulars so far, that had *καί* been used here as the connecting particle, its reference might have been misunderstood. Even as it is, commentators have insisted on finding in this passage six co-ordinate "principles," instead of four, with a parenthetical illustration in the midst. They would have had some plausible ground for this mistake had all the clauses been connected by the strong conjunction *καί*. The use of the lighter particle *τε* between "laying on of hands" and "resurrection of the dead" ought to have prevented the error into which they have fallen. But, in the second place, it is possible that we are to see in the preference for *τε* in introducing "resurrection" and "judgment," a suggestion of the thought that even the four principles here enumerated are not precisely on the same level. Is it not evident that they consist of two couplets, the

members of which are more strongly tied together than the couplets are to one another? There is a closer connection between faith and repentance on the one hand and resurrection and judgment on the other, than there is between the pairs themselves. Hence each pair is formed by the conjunction *καί*, while they are more loosely hung together by the enclitic *τε*, on the principle stated by the grammarians, “*τε* adjungit, *καί* conjungit.”¹

It may be asked, If the meaning of the first clause of the second verse be what we have indicated above, why is *διδαχῆς* in the genitive case? To this question we answer—*first*, that if the reading *διδαχῆν*,

¹ An examination of this Epistle will shew that the writer is not always punctiliously consistent in the use of these particles. So much the better for the rendering here advocated, which rests not on such grammatical niceties, but on broad general grounds. There is, however, one passage in chap. iv. 12 which presents a rather interesting parallel to the one we are now considering in the use of *καί* and *τε* in linking together a series of couples: “For the word of God is living and (*καί*) active, and (*καί*) sharper than any two-edged sword, and (*καί*) piercing even to the dividing of soul and (*καί*) spirit, of both (*τε*) joints and (*καί*) marrow, and (*καί*) quick to discern the thoughts and (*καί*) intents of the heart.” The four statements here made regarding the word of God—that it is living and active, sharp, piercing, discriminating—are all connected by *καί*. So, too, the four pairs, living and active, soul and spirit, joints and marrow, thoughts and intents, are coupled and co-ordinated by *καί*. But the weaker conjunction *τε* connects the pair, “soul and spirit” with the pair “joints and marrow.” This case is somewhat similar to the one we have been considering, for “joints and marrow” are a mere parenthetical illustration, like “washings and laying on of hands.” The word of God divides between soul and spirit as the dissecting knife does between joints and marrow. Hence in both passages, to shew that these couples are not in line with the others, but are mere passing illustrations, they are punctuated off, in the one case from the preceding, in the other from the following clause, by the use of *τε* rather than *καί*.

found in *B*, and adopted by Westcott and Hort, be accepted, not even the shadow of a difficulty remains. But, *second*, even if the reading of the *textus receptus* be retained, διδαχῆς may be regarded as in apposition to the previous clause, and, like it, under the government of θεμέλιον. "Not laying again the foundation . . . of the teaching (or the things taught by) washings and imposition of hands."

One other grammatical objection may be made to the view of the passage here proposed. It may be said, Why is τε used as the connecting particle between βαπτισμῶν and ἐπιθέσεως (βαπτισμῶν διδαχῆς, ἐπιθέσεως τε χερῶν), where we should have expected καί? Well, that is a serious difficulty for those who hold that we have here six co-ordinate "principles of the doctrine of Christ." Why in that case should they not all be linked together by the same conjunction καί? But if we have in this clause a mere parenthesis, epexegetical of the first couplet, then the writer may have avoided the use of καί, to prevent our mistaking these two Old Testament rites for "principles of the doctrine of Christ," and putting them on the same platform with repentance and faith, resurrection and judgment.

The following translation, in which we have endeavoured, in not very elegant English, to give effect to the change of particle in the Greek, may serve to shew at a glance the view we take of the true meaning of this much contested passage. We are aware, of course, that "also" is not a happy rendering of τε.

“Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith exercised upon God (the things taught by washings, also by laying on of hands), also, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.”

We have said that no previous writer, so far as we know, has proposed this interpretation of the passage under consideration, yet it is interesting to mark how nearly some have struck what seems to be the true vein, and have turned aside without finding it after all. The words of Calvin, which first started the train of thought that led up to the view we have now been advocating, are as follows:—“Some read them separately, ‘of baptisms’ and ‘of doctrine,’ but I prefer to connect them, though I explain them differently from others, for *I regard the words as being in apposition*, as grammarians say, according to this form, ‘Not laying again the foundation of repentance, of faith in God, of the resurrection of the dead, *which is the doctrine of baptisms and of the laying on of hands.*’ If therefore these two clauses, the doctrine of baptisms and of the laying on of hands, be included in a parenthesis, the passage would run better; for except you read them as in apposition, there would be the absurdity of a repetition. For, what is the *doctrine of baptisms* but what he mentions here, faith in God, repentance, judgment, and the like?”¹ The suggestion of the true meaning is unquestionably here,

¹ Calvin on Hebrews, p. 133.

but Calvin fails to reach it, because it does not seem to have occurred to him that the washings and laying on of hands were Old Testament symbols, not New Testament rites. To the same effect are the words of Owen: "As if he had said, 'These principles of the doctrine of Christ—viz., *repentance, faith, resurrection, and judgment*, are those doctrines wherein they are to be instructed who are to be baptised and to have hands laid on them.' According to this sense *the words are to be read as in a parenthesis*, 'Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God (namely, the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands) of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.'"¹ Alford comes still nearer to the true solution, for he insists upon the fact that βαπτισμῶν refers to Jewish washings, not to Christian baptism, and in answer to the objection of Stuart, that the doctrine of Jewish washings has nothing to do with the elements of Christian doctrine he says, "I may fairly say, that such an objection is brought in mere thoughtlessness. The converts being Jews, their first and most obvious elementary instruction would be, teaching them *the typical signification of their own law in its Christian fulfilment*."² And he actually adds, "The doctrine of laying on of hands, like that of washings, not being confined to any one special rite, will mean the reference and import of all that imposition of hands which was practised under

¹ Owen on Hebrews, p. 18.

² Alford's Greek Testament, Vol. IV., p. 106.

the law, and found in some cases its continuance under the Gospel." Here indeed he comes so near to the point, that one wonders how he could have missed it. But it did not occur to him, though the interpolation of the word *διδάχῃς* might have suggested it, that the washings and imposition of hands were the Old Testament way of teaching repentance and faith, and so, like the rest, he fell into the snare of regarding them as two of the fundamental points of Christian doctrine, standing on the same footing as the two which precede and the two which follow.

Before concluding, let us briefly point out the strong points of the exposition now proposed. In the first place, it eliminates from the list of foundation doctrines the two points of which it may be safely said that it is difficult to vindicate their title to be there, leaving only the four which are confessedly both elementary and fundamental, repentance, faith, resurrection, judgment. In the second place, it gives a simple and satisfactory explanation of the point at which the word *διδάχῃς* is introduced. And in the third place, it gives to the word *βαπτισμῶν* its true meaning, the very meaning attached to it by our author in another place, not torturing *βαπτισμός* into *βάπτισμα*, and then devising fanciful and far-fetched reasons for its being put in the plural number. These are strong exegetical reasons for preferring the interpretation we have ventured to suggest. And, finally, we submit that the novelty of the view now propounded is no valid reason for its rejection, if it

gives a natural and adequate sense to the writer's words, and obviates the difficulties with which every other interpretation is encumbered, and that without raising other difficulties at least as formidable as those which it avoids.

These are the grounds on which we claim that it should be accepted as the true meaning of the passage. But, that point being settled, it is to us an additional recommendation that this view rescues the words from the hands of the Sacerdotalists, who are apt to be very jubilant over the supposed fact that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in enumerating the six fundamental points of Christian doctrine, gives a large and central place to two sacramental or ceremonial rites. And it will be a source of satisfaction to those who do not believe in the divine authority of Confirmation to find that this passage, which puzzled Calvin himself as the only one that seemed to favour the practice, has not the remotest reference to that rite. Hear the words of so excellent a commentator as the late Dr Lindsay of the United Presbyterian Church, as indicative of the perplexity which these verses gave to an honest Presbyterian :—" But did imposition of hands invariably accompany baptism ? In the institution of the ordinance there is no mention of it. Though baptising is often recorded, in only two instances was there laying on of hands. In both this was done by the apostles themselves, and extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were bestowed. The practice was retained in the primitive Church, even after

miracles ceased, and gave rise in after time to much superstition. It was separated from baptism, when that took place in infancy, and became the origin of the ceremony of Confirmation, which in some Churches has a sacramental character. Whether it should be retained in the Church depends altogether on the question whether it really was a part of baptism, or at least a necessary sequel to it, or only an occasional and extraordinary accompaniment of it at the hands of the apostles. Delitzsch argues that the inclusion of it among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ favours the former view. But, on the other hand, the historical facts that have been mentioned seem decidedly to lead to the opposite conclusion. And we must remember that the first principles spoken of by the apostle are not those principles which in a systematic exhibition of Christianity would be considered the most fundamental; for there are many others which in this point of view would take precedence of them; but they are simply the principles with which it was considered necessary that babes in Christ should be made acquainted. And just as the distinction between Christian baptism and other Jewish washings would require to be pointed out to them, though these were no part of Christianity, so also it might be considered indispensable, that the instructions imparted regarding baptism should embrace its connection with the laying on of hands, and all the more, perhaps, if the laying on of hands sometimes

took place and sometimes did not. So palpable a difference would demand explanation in the case of young Christians, though mature believers might readily comprehend its reasons."¹ How lame and laboured all this arguing is! It is the struggle of an honest man, drawn in one direction by his Christian instincts and the general tenor of Scripture, and in the opposite direction by what he regarded as the plain and obvious teaching of the words he was endeavouring to expound. Can we doubt that it would have been a welcome deliverance to him, if he had only seen that the "laying on of hands," for which he found it so hard to find a place among the first principles of the Gospel, is here only mentioned incidentally as one of the instructive shadows of the law?

¹ "Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews," by the late William Lindsay, D.D. Vol. I., pp. 245-6.

V.

THE SINAI COVENANT: ITS PLACE AND PURPOSE IN THE HISTORY OF REDEMPTION.

FEW will be disposed to deny the importance of a distinct conception of the nature of the transaction which took place at Mount Sinai when Jehovah proclaimed the ten commandments in the hearing of His people Israel. It was unquestionably a great epoch in the history of that people. But it was more. It had a broader aspect and a deeper significance than that. It was an era in the history of the human race, a momentous step in that series of divine dispensations towards fallen man which fill up the interval between his expulsion from the earthly and his final admission to the heavenly paradise. Moreover, the way in which the Apostle Paul, especially in his Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, refers to the giving of the law at Sinai, makes it evident that in his eyes a right view of that transaction was essential to clear and correct conceptions of the Gospel. And yet it must be acknowledged that the subject is as difficult as it is important. The great diversity of opinion that prevails regarding it, even among Protestant divines who have made a study of

the question, is sufficient proof of this. Indeed, so complex do the transactions at Sinai appear, when read in the light of New Testament statement and allusion, and so contradictory and bewildering are the opinions of theologians on the subject, that one is quite conscious of laying himself open to the charge of presumption in venturing to hope that he can do anything to clear away the darkness and unravel the perplexities which are either inherent in this theme, or have in the course of ages gathered round it.

At the outset, however, it is necessary to indicate the limits within which our discussion is to be carried on. We have no intention of entering upon so wide a field as the law given at Sinai, in all its aspects and all the ends which it was designed to serve. We propose simply to inquire, What was the precise nature and object of the *covenant* into which God entered with Israel at Sinai? That there was a *bonâ fide* covenant made between God and Israel on that occasion will scarcely be denied.¹ Thus, in the account of the matter given in Exodus, we read, "Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My *covenant*, thou shalt be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people, for all the earth is Mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." In the rehearsal of the narrative in Deuteronomy, Moses says: "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers

¹ Exod. xix. 5, 6 ; Deut. v. 2, 3.

(that is, not with them only), but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day." We do not rest, however, on the mere fact that the word "covenant" is used to describe the transaction, but on the further fact that it contains all the elements of a covenant, the contracting parties being God and Israel, the condition, "if ye will obey My voice," the promise, "thou shalt be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people," and the penalty, indicated in many parts of the Mosaic writings, but set forth with special fulness in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. Besides, this covenant which the Lord made with them when He took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt is contrasted in Jeremiah xxxi. and Hebrews viii. with the new and better covenant under which it is our privilege to live.

But, though the fact that a covenant of some sort was made between God and Israel at Sinai is admitted by all, there are many eminent theologians who take such a view of the proceedings which there transpired, that they are obliged practically to deprive that covenant of all reality, making it nothing but an empty, if not a delusive form. Thus, in that extremely entertaining and really valuable book, "*The Marrow of Modern Divinity*," which raised so great a storm in our Scottish Church during last century, Antinomista is represented as asking, "But whether were the ten commandments, as they were delivered to them on Mount Sinai, the covenant of works or no?"¹

¹ Boston's Complete Works, Vol. VII., pp. 195-205. London, 1854.

To which Evangelista promptly answers, "They were delivered to them as the covenant of works." Then, after distinctly asserting that the same covenant was made with them as with Adam before the fall, he explains that this was done, not with the intention or expectation of their obtaining eternal life by their obedience, but simply to convince them of sin, and drive them out of themselves to Christ. Upon which Nomista, another of the interlocutors, very naturally remarks, "But yet, Sir, methinks it is somewhat strange that the Lord should put them upon doing the law, and also promise them life for doing, and yet never intend it." To which Evangelista replies, "Though He did so, yet did He neither require of them that which was unjust, nor yet dissemble with them in the promise; for the Lord may justly require perfect obedience at all men's hands by virtue of that covenant which was made with them in Adam; and if any man could yield perfect obedience to the law both in doing and suffering he should have eternal life; for we may not deny (says Calvin) but that the reward of eternal salvation belongeth to the upright obedience of the law. But God knew well enough that the Israelites were never able to yield such an obedience; and yet He saw it meet to propound eternal life to them upon these terms, that so He might speak to them in their own humour, as indeed it was meet, for they swelled with mad assurance in themselves, saying, 'All that the Lord commandeth we will do

and be obedient' (Exod. xix. 8). Well, said the Lord, if you will needs be doing, why here is a law to be kept; and if you carefully observe the righteousness of it, you shall be saved; sending them of purpose to the law to awaken and convince them, to sentence and humble them, and to make them see their own folly in seeking for life that way; in short, to make them see the terms under which they stood, that so they might be brought out of themselves, and expect nothing from the Lord in relation to life, but all from Christ."

Boston, in his notes on the above passage, takes substantially the same ground. He does, indeed, see in the first place an announcement of the covenant of grace in the preface to the ten commandments. But he also maintains that God renewed with Israel at Sinai the covenant broken by Adam in Eden, and yet without any expectation of their keeping it, or any desire that they should seek life eternal by this path. To call this making a covenant with them seems to us to be an abuse of words. It was merely a republication of the terms of the original covenant of works, which had been forgotten or lost sight of, and that, not with the view of getting men to enter on it anew, but rather of warning them against the sin and folly of such a course. The objection to this view of what took place at Sinai is, that if it was a mere re-announcement, for important ends of the covenant of works made with man before the fall, this cannot be reconciled with the fact that God did then and there

enter into a formal covenant with Israel. But if it be said that this was an actual renewal of the covenant of works, then we say that it was impossible that God should ever so mock His poor fallen creatures as formally to renew with them a covenant which they had already broken, under the curse of which they were then lying, and which He knew that they could not keep for a single hour. It is no answer to this objection to remind us of our Lord's reply to the self-righteous ruler. For the cases are not parallel. That ruler approached Christ in a spirit and with a question that shewed that it was with him a foregone conclusion that he was to inherit eternal life by his own good deeds. All he wanted to know was what he had to do, and therefore the appropriate answer was, "If you will enter into life by doing, this and nothing less is what you have to do, keep the commandments." But the case of Israel at Sinai was entirely different. There God took the initiative. It was He that invited the people to enter into covenant with Him, and we cannot believe that He would cast a snare upon them, and throw a fatal stumbling-block in their way by encouraging them to renew the broken covenant of works.

The view of the late Principal Fairbairn, as brought out both in his work on "The Typology" and his later treatise on "The Revelation of Law in Scripture," is somewhat different. He holds that there is a close parallel between God's dealings with Israel and His dealings with His people still. He calls special attention

to the fact that the covenant at Sinai was made with a people who had been redeemed, and were already in a gracious relation to God. That is to say, God did with them what He does with His people still; He first redeemed them, and then put them under law. The covenant form in which the law was given did not, he maintains, alter the nature of the transaction, but only made it more impressive by surrounding it with more solemn sanctions. But this is a mere evasion of the real difficulty. The knotty question is, What was the nature and design of the Sinai covenant? Dr Fairbairn cuts the knot by saying, It was just the giving of the law by God to the people whom He had redeemed, and the fact that He gave it in the form of a covenant is of no consequence at all. Yet this covenant-form is the very thing to be accounted for. The analogy which he draws between Israel of old and God's people now breaks down at this very point. For believers under the Gospel are not put under the law as a covenant. They are indeed under it as a rule of life; but as a covenant they are delivered from it finally and for ever. It is easy to see how in this instance Dr Fairbairn's views of the typology of the Old Testament, usually so sound and judicious, have led him astray. Granting that in many respects, such as the bondage, the deliverance, the wilderness journey, the settlement in Canaan, Israel was a type of the Church of Christ, yet we have it on inspired authority in Hebrews viii. that in God's dealings with them at Sinai it is not a

parallel to His dealings with His people under the Gospel, but a contrast, that we are to find. It is not a little remarkable that this passage, almost the *locus classicus* on the subject, has been entirely overlooked by Dr Fairbairn :—

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah : not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt ; because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people : and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

We shall afterwards look a little more closely into this important statement. At present it is sufficient simply to quote it as implying on the very face of it that, instead of the analogy which Dr Fairbairn finds between God's dealings with Israel at Sinai and with believers under the Gospel, there is in truth an utter contrast.

The view of Witsius is peculiar. He holds that the covenant made at Sinai was neither formally the covenant of grace nor the covenant of works, but a national covenant pre-supposing both. The condition of that national covenant was sincere but not perfect obedience ; and the promise, “not only temporal blessings, such as the possession of the land of Canaan,

and a peaceable life there, abounding with all plenty of everything desirable, but also spiritual and eternal.”¹ This covenant, he holds, differs from the covenant of works in accepting a sincere though imperfect obedience, and from the covenant of grace in containing no promises of strength to enable Israel to render this obedience.

This is ingenious and plausible, but when closely examined it will be found to be an erroneous and a dangerous view. God never promised eternal life to man upon condition of an imperfect but sincere obedience. To maintain that He did would be to subvert the whole teaching of the Apostle Paul in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians.² He there asserts the utter incompatibility of the two ways, justification by faith and justification by works. He shews that Abraham was justified by faith; that the law given 430 years after the time of Abraham could not annul the promise made to him; that David, who lived under the law, speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works; and that even so late as the time of Habakkuk, it is declared that the just shall live by faith. Nor will it mend the matter to say that God offered eternal life to men on condition of sincere obedience, without promising grace to enable them to render it, for the very purpose of convincing them of sin, and shutting them up to the necessity of seeking salvation by grace

¹ Witsius on The Covenants, Bk. IV. ch. iv. §§ 43-55.

² Rom. iv. 1-8; Gal. iii. 6-18.

alone. For, in the first place, we cannot believe that God, even to accomplish such an end, would actually take men bound to seek eternal life in a way in which they could never find it. And, in the second place, such a covenant would have been very ill-fitted to secure the end supposed, for there was no great need of a promise of grace, and no great room for conviction of sin, since it was a part of the agreement that a faulty obedience would be accepted.

Those commonly known as the Plymouth Brethren are very fond of allegorising Scripture, and finding some deep spiritual meaning hid under the details of Old Testament History. The view taken of this transaction by one of their ablest writers lies in this direction, and is certainly very peculiar. He tells us that God's purpose, when He addressed Israel as they lay encamped at the foot of Sinai, was to recapitulate His merciful dealings with them, and to rehearse the covenant of grace, promising that if they adhered to that they should be a peculiar treasure to Him above all people. But what did Israel do? Totally and perversely misunderstanding His design, they abandoned God's covenant of grace for that covenant of works which is so much more congenial to the heart of man. They presumptuously said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." This was the first disastrous step, and it led to the most dismal results. From that moment God's whole aspect towards Israel was changed. The mountain was fenced around to prevent the people coming near. God enveloped Him-

self with a thick cloud, and in place of the gracious accents of love, there was heard the stern voice of law. And all this, they say, is related to warn us of the danger of getting off the ground of grace, and taking our stand on the ground of law.¹

Now, this is nothing else than a complete, and even grotesque, misrepresentation of the facts of the case. Most men would suppose that when God said, "Now then, if ye will obey My voice indeed," He simply meant, "If ye will do what I command you." But no; it seems He meant the very opposite of this, so that when Israel supposed this to be His meaning, and promised the obedience which they imagined He required, they not only made a great mistake, but committed a heinous sin. Surely we may say with reverence, if such tremendous consequences hinged upon their clearly understanding that it was not obedience but faith that was wanted, a form of words might have been found less likely to mislead. But when we turn to the account of the transaction given in Deuteronomy, we find that they did not misunderstand God's meaning, for He expressed His entire approval of their words.² "And the Lord heard the voice of your words when ye spake unto me, and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken unto thee; they have well said all that they have spoken." What does the Plymouth Brother say to this? Oh! he

¹ Notes on the Book of Exodus, by C. H. M., ch. xx.

² Deut. v. 28.

says, God does not here approve of the vow they had made, but of their terror at the consequences of their vow. A more complete misrepresentation of the facts of the case it is difficult to conceive of. What had the people said? No doubt they had expressed their terror at hearing the voice of the living God out of the fire, and had entreated Moses to act as a mediator, hearing God's word and reporting it to them; but when they said, "Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee," they added, "And we will hear it and do it." And it is immediately upon this renewal of their promise of obedience that the Lord says, "They have well said *all* that they have spoken." Nay, more, to shew that it was their promise quite as much as their alarm that He approved of, He added these words, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me and keep all My commandments always." Other objections to this view might be urged. But enough. It is preposterous, like many of the oracular interpretations that emanate from the same source.

The last view of the subject to which we shall refer is that of the late Dr John Erskine of Edinburgh. His idea is, that at Sinai Jehovah entered into a covenant with Israel as a nation, requiring of them an outward obedience to the letter of the law, with the promise of national blessings if they kept this covenant, and the threatening of national calamities in the event of their failing to keep it.¹

¹ "Theological Dissertations," pp. 38, 39, 51.

“Read attentively,” he says, “and without prejudice Moses’ account of the Sinai covenant. There you will find that the chief promises of it were, that the Israelites should with little difficulty subdue the mighty nations of Canaan ; that they should enjoy a long, quiet, and peaceable possession of that country under the divine protection ; that their land should abound with corn and wine, milk and honey, and everything else necessary for their outward prosperity ; that they should be preserved from famine, pestilence, and the other plagues and diseases that God had inflicted on Egypt ; that God would multiply them as the sands of the sea and as the stars of heaven ; that he would give them victory over their enemies, and place among them the external symbols of His presence. . . . Nor is this all. Scripture expressly asserts that God, by bestowing such temporal blessings, fulfils His engagements in the Sinai covenant (Deut. vii. 12-15), ‘Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and mercy which He sware unto thy fathers.’ Would you know how it shall appear that God hath kept His covenant ? What follows will inform you : ‘And He will love thee, and bless ye, and multiply thee ; He will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn and thy wine,’ &c. . . . The punishments threatened against idolatry and other gross breaches of the Sinai covenant were also temporal, such as diseases, unsuccessful war, famine, pestilence, casting out of the land of Canaan, smiting that land with a preternatural barrenness, and scattering its old inhabitants among the heathen.”

So far as to the promise and threatening of the covenant. As to the condition required, he says—

“This was no other than an abstinence from servile work on the Sabbath, freedom from legal impurities and gross vices, an offering the sacrifices prescribed in the law, in time of war the depending on God alone for success, and not having recourse to horses, chariots, or alliance with idolatrous states ; and, in general, obedience to the letter of the law, even when it did not flow from a principle of faith and love.”

With this view we are disposed in the main to

agree. Not that we would endorse all Dr Erskine's interpretations of particular passages of Scripture, which are sometimes too ingenious and far-fetched, as if they had been pressed into the service of his favourite theory. Neither do we agree with him in thinking that God's dealings with individual Israelites, as well as with the nation, were regulated by this covenant made at Sinai. Nor do we concur with him in his apparently unqualified approval of the principles brought out by Bishop Warburton in his "Divine Legation of Moses." In particular, we are disposed to think that he is too absolute and peremptory in maintaining that it was only an outward obedience to the letter of the law that God required under the Sinai covenant, and that it was a matter of no moment in what spirit that obedience was rendered. That the obedience was outward rather than inward and spiritual seems clear from the way in which it is described in the Old Testament, and from the way in which in the New Testament it is contrasted with the kind of obedience required of believers now. But it does not follow from this that it was of no consequence in what spirit Israel obeyed the law. First, because it cannot under any circumstances be a matter of indifference with God whether His creatures serve Him outwardly or with the heart. Secondly, because we do occasionally find imbedded among the precepts of the Sinai covenant such words as these, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and

with all thy soul, and with all thy might." And thirdly, because while an individual may go on playing the hypocrite for a whole lifetime, outwardly complying with a law which in his heart he hates, such hypocrisy cannot for any length of time be practised by a nation. The outward forms of religion and morality will soon be cast away by a people among whom piety and principle have died out. So that while undoubtedly the emphasis was laid in the covenant upon Israel's outward obedience to the law, and while its promises and threatenings were made to hinge on that as their formal condition, it is going too far to represent the spirit of that obedience as a thing of absolutely no importance.

Still, with these explanations and reservations, we think Dr Erskine is right in holding that this was a covenant into which God invited Israel as a nation to enter, promising them certain outward and national blessings, on condition of their rendering a general, though not altogether perfect, obedience to the law, and threatening them with national calamities in the event of disobedience. Such a covenant as this God might make even with His fallen creatures. Obviously it did not interfere with the issues either of the covenant of works or the covenant of grace. It lay in quite another region; it ran on a different line. Whether individual Israelites were under the curse of the one covenant, or heirs of the blessing of the other, that did not hinder Israel as a people being under this national covenant, with a view not to

spiritual and eternal, but to outward and temporary ends. Nor did God, in entering into this arrangement with Israel, mock their impotence or tantalise them with vain hopes, as would have been the case had He invited them to renew the covenant which Adam broke. For although Israel in the end utterly failed to keep their national engagements, and brought down the threatened penalty on their own heads, yet the obedience required was not obviously and hopelessly impracticable; nay, there were periods in their history when it was fairly rendered, and the fruits of it were manifestly enjoyed.

It may be urged, however, as an objection to this view of the transaction at Sinai, that God, who is a Spirit, and whose prerogative it is to search the heart, could never be satisfied with an outward and general obedience, which in the case of many would be hollow and insincere. To that we answer, This is true if you speak of individuals, but not necessarily so when it is nations that are concerned. For nations, as such, have only a temporal existence, and must therefore be rewarded and punished in this present world, or not at all. This being the case, the kind of obedience required of them may very reasonably be correspondingly lower than that of individuals whose rewards and punishments shall be eternal. But again, it may be argued that such promises as these, "I will be to you a God," and "ye shall be to Me a people," imply something far more spiritual than any such national covenant as we are now consider-

ing, and cannot be exhausted by any bestowal of mere outward and temporal blessing. True, we again reply, if these words describe the relation of God to the individual soul. Then indeed it would be impossible to exaggerate the depth of meaning and fulness of blessing which they contain. But the case is different when it is the relation in which God stands to a nation as such that is described. We must then understand the promise in a very qualified sense, a sense to be determined, not by *a priori* considerations, but by the actual engagements into which we find God entering with that covenant people.

We believe that this view of the nature of the Sinai covenant will be found to agree with the statements made regarding that covenant in different parts of the New Testament, and indeed to harmonise them. The most important of these statements, and the one most directly bearing on our present theme, is that which we have already quoted from the eighth chapter of Hebrews, where the covenant that God made with Israel when He led them out of Egypt is contrasted with the new and better covenant under which we are now living. Indeed, so sharp is the contrast that one might at first suppose that the one was the covenant of works made originally with our first parent, with its promise of eternal life upon condition of perfect obedience to the laws of God; and that the other was the covenant of grace made with believers under the Gospel, or made with the

Mediator on behalf of His believing people. But on reflection it will appear that this cannot possibly be the contrast intended. *First*, because the people of God before the coming of Christ were not under the broken covenant of works with its inevitable curse, as we have already shewn. And, *secondly*, because this view of the Sinai covenant would be in flat contradiction to the statement of the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, where he maintains that whatever may have been God's purpose in the giving of the law, it could not have been meant to annul the previous promise or supersede the previous method of salvation by faith as revealed to Abraham.

But if we understand the writer here (and remember, he is addressing Jews), to be drawing a contrast between the national covenant made with their fathers at Sinai and the far higher and better relation to God into which Jews and Gentiles alike are now brought by believing in Jesus, then we get a satisfactory explanation of the passage before us, and one that brings it into complete harmony with the Epistle to the Galatians. For what are here said to be the characteristic differences between the dispensation under which the Israelites were placed at Sinai and that under which believers are now living? They are these—*First*, that there was no promise then, as there is now, of the Spirit to write God's law upon the heart; and, *secondly*, that there was no promise of forgiveness. This

quite answers to the idea of its being a covenant that required, not so much an inward and spiritual, as an outward and national obedience to the law, and that had nothing higher than temporal sanctions. There was no provision under this covenant for the writing of God's law upon the heart, so as to ensure a spiritual obedience. And there was no provision for the remission of the penalty in any case. Sooner or later, in one form or another, the nation had to suffer for national sin. "The word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward."¹

But will the idea of a national covenant carry us through the interpretation of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, as well as through the eighth of Hebrews? Let us see. The apostle is indeed looking upon the matter there from a different point of view. He had been shewing that Abraham was justified, or accounted righteous, because he believed God, and that it is those who are of faith that inherit Abraham's blessing. But the question naturally arises, Why go so far back as the dealings of God with Abraham? The Sinai covenant was subsequently introduced. Must it not therefore be held to have superseded and set aside the earlier transaction? No, replies the apostle; that were inconsistent with honour and good faith even in the dealings of man with man, and there-

¹ Heb. ii. 2.

fore it must be utterly impossible with God. Even a man's covenant when legally confirmed is held to be incapable of alteration. So that, whatever was meant by the dispensation at Sinai, it could not have been intended to annul or supersede the previous promise to Abraham and his seed. Now, this line of argument obviously implies—*First*, that what took place at Sinai had all the aspect of a renewal of the original covenant of works, so that it might be very naturally regarded as setting before men another and a very different way of entering into life from that proposed to Abraham. Yet, *secondly*, it could not really be inconsistent with the previously-existing covenant of grace, but must harmonise with it; nay, must in some way be subsidiary to it. This quite answers to the view of the transactions at Sinai which we are now maintaining, but to no other. And it brings us to consider the important question, why such a peculiar covenant was ever made.

That question the apostle answers in the passage we are now considering.¹ “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” From the first therefore it was designed to be temporary, to last only from the time of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness to the birth of Christ. And it was added or appointed (προσετέθη) because of transgressions.²

¹ Gal. iii. 19.

² Different views have been taken of the meaning of this expression — τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν. Ellicot classifies them thus—(α) “ad coerendas transgressionones; (β) transgressionum gratiâ, *scil.* to call them

The children of Israel were so intractable and perverse, so prone to depart from God, that without some such arrangement as this they would have lost their national identity, mixed themselves among the surrounding nations, and learned their idolatrous ways. The Holy Spirit was not yet largely given to prevent such a disastrous issue by the potent influences of His grace. Therefore a temporary arrangement of this nature was needed, as a sort of hedge about the people, to restrain them from gross transgressions, and to maintain some decent outward observance of the rules of morality and the ordinances of religion, until the coming of the Messiah and the setting up of His kingdom. This end the national covenant, with its promises and penalties, did to a large extent accomplish, one striking illustration of which is the familiar fact that the Jews have never lapsed into idolatry since the time of the captivity in Babylon.

forth, to multiply them, and, as it were, to bring them to a head ; (γ) *transgressionum causâ, i.e. ut transgressiones palam faceret eoque modo homines cogeret ad agnitionem sui reatus.*" Of these he rejects the first on lexical grounds, believing that no satisfactory examples of such a meaning of *χαρὶν* have yet been adduced. But we regard it as quite a sufficient answer to this objection to say that eminent Greek commentators, such as Chrysostom and Theophylact, who knew the genius and capabilities of their own language, preferred this interpretation. We have no hesitation in agreeing with them. This object, the repression of open sin, is the first and most obvious design of a law given to any people. "The law is not made for a righteous man ; but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane," &c. Besides, as we shall see, the use of the law in convincing of sin is brought out by the apostle towards the close of the chapter, so that to attach that meaning to the words before us would be to ascribe to him a mere vapid tautology, instead of a progressive and well-ordered argument.

But there was another and a deeper reason for this covenant of law. It was not the covenant of works made with Adam, yet it was like it. It was perfectly analogous to it, a *facsimile* of it on a lower or earthly platform. During those 1500 years God was carrying on a great practical *experimentum crucis* with the two great divisions of the human race. The Gentiles were left to the light of nature, suffered to walk in their own ways, in order to test the question, "Can man in the exercise of his own unaided reason and conscience find out God, and raise himself to a higher, better life?" And the result of that experiment was, that the Gentile nations drifted farther and farther away from the purer theism which had come down to them from tradition, and which, even apart from that, the works of nature ought to have suggested, until they landed, or rather, let us say, continued sinking deeper from age to age, in the bottomless pit of idolatry, with its nameless abominations. Running parallel with this was another experiment, conducted on a smaller scale, but not less interesting and instructive, because quite as decisive in its results. The Jews, the chosen people of God, to whom He had by direct revelation made known His character and will, were put under a covenant of law, with the view of testing this further question, "Can man, even when placed in the most favoured circumstances, win eternal life by any doings of his own?" And the answer to that question furnished by the history of Israel was an emphatic negative. For if they—a people of great force of

character, placed in a position exceptionally advantageous—utterly failed, repeatedly and miserably broke down in their attempts to keep the outward and national covenant of works which God had made with them, how much more certain would such failure be in the case of those who should attempt to keep the covenant of works in its higher form, requiring a spiritual and perfect obedience?

It was no doubt intended by God that Israel should draw this conclusion from those breaches of the national covenant into which they were perpetually falling. This was the great spiritual aim of the whole arrangement. It was thus that it was directly subservient to the covenant of grace. For the law of the ten commandments which Israel at Sinai were taken bound to obey has undoubtedly a spirit as well as a letter. In the spirit of it, it is nothing less than the eternal rule of right, the moral law of God, substantially the same as the law of nature under which Adam was originally placed. And it was intended that the individuals of which the Jewish nation was composed should feel that an outward obedience to the letter of this law was not enough, that they must go deeper than that, recognise its inner spirit, and try their hearts and lives by this standard, as no doubt the pious among them did. One thing that would help them to take this deeper view, to make this more spiritual application of the law, was the peculiar character of the tenth commandment. Forbidding them even to set covetous eyes on anything that was

their neighbour's, it lay, as it were on the border line between overt offences and heart sins, like our modern crime of "loitering with intent to steal," if indeed it did not altogether cross the line. At all events it was fitted, and no doubt intended, to serve as a link between the outward letter and the inward spirit of the law, and to lead every thoughtful Jew to the conclusion that, whatever the terms of God's covenant with the nation might be, nothing short of a spiritual obedience could be required of the individual by that God whose prerogative it is to search the heart. We know that it was by means of this commandment that Saul of Tarsus had his eyes opened, his pride humbled, and his legal hopes slain.¹ "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. . . . For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." Such being Paul's own experience, it was natural that he should indicate this as one important end which the law or Sinai covenant was designed to serve.² "Is the law then against the promises of God?" Is it a new and entirely different way of obtaining righteousness and life, before which the way of gracious promise made known to Abraham must give place and disappear? "God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus

¹ Rom. vii. 7, 9.² Gal. iii. 21-24.

Christ might be given to them that believe. But before the faith came, we were kept (or garrisoned) under law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our pedagogue to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

This end, however, the law accomplished only to a very limited extent, only indeed in the case of those who were enabled by divine teaching to see its breadth and spirituality, and to feel the moral impossibility of their coming up to so high a standard. Others, and there is reason to fear they were not few, mistaking entirely the nature and object of the covenant into which God had invited their fathers to enter at Mount Sinai, set themselves to seek eternal life through compliance with its terms. To them it thus became a deadly covenant of works. This was elevating the handmaid to the position of the married wife.¹ The covenant of Mount Sinai, so regarded and so used, was like Hagar, the bondwoman, who could only give birth to slaves. Hagar, so long as she was merely Sarah's handmaid, was a useful member of the household. But when she became Abraham's concubine, and began to look upon herself as the equal, nay, the superior of her mistress, the decree had to go forth: "Cast out the bondwoman and her children, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman." "Which things are an allegory," teaching us that so long as the national covenant made

¹ Gal. iv. 21-31.

with Israel at Sinai was regarded as subsidiary to the covenant of grace, it served important practical ends, but that when it was elevated to the place which that better covenant was designed to hold, and eagerly embraced by Israel, as though by means of it they might bring forth fruit to God, the time had come when it must be put away. This may account for the strong language used by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in reference to this Sinai covenant. He speaks of it as decaying, waxing old, ready to vanish away. It was a law that made nothing perfect, a commandment that had to be disannulled for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. Nay, while it was thus weak, obsolete, and effete for any good purpose, yet when men clung to it in the hope of finding it a source of righteousness and life, then it became possessed of deadly power. Thus identified with the original covenant of works, it became the fruitful mother of bondage instead of liberty, death instead of life, curse instead of blessing. To cling to it was to reject Christ and the better covenant which was ratified by His blood.

The Sinai covenant had served its purpose and done its work. It had kept Israel from absorption among the surrounding nations, even when their territory was overrun, and their entire people carried away captive. It had to some extent restrained them from falling into the grosser Gentile sins. And it had proved conclusively, as by an *a fortiori* argument, that man cannot win eternal life by the keeping of the law.

There was no further need of it, now that Messiah had come, and that Jew and Gentile were to be fused into one homogeneous Christian Church. Nay, as the Jewish members of that church were bent on perverting it to a purpose for which God had never designed it, the time had evidently come when what was at best but the "rudiments of the world," and had now become "the ministration of death," should give place to the "ministration of the Spirit" that giveth life. Mount Sinai with its gloom and bondage must give place to Mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, with its liberty and glory. The things which are shaken must be removed, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

VI.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

THE resurrection of the body has been so long an accepted article of the Christian creed that we hardly realise what a mystery it is. We have been so long accustomed to hear the Apostle Paul's magnificent defence and exposition of the doctrine at almost every Burial Service, that we have scarcely ever paused to ponder what, after all, this resurrection means. No such conception as that of a general rising of the vast congregation of the dead seems ever to have dawned upon the pagan world. The Epicureans, being materialists, believed that the death of the body was the final close of the man's personal existence. The Stoics, with their more spiritual views, looked on death as the happy release of the soul from its bondage to the flesh. To the one the resurrection was an impossibility; to the other it would have seemed a calamity rather than a boon. No wonder, then, that when Paul came to Athens preaching this doctrine, both said contemptuously, "What will this babbler say?" And so, while they listened patiently to his exposure of the folly of that idolatry to which the city was wholly given, when they heard of the resurrection

of the dead, some mocked, and others said, "We will hear thee again of this matter." ¹

The doctrine of the resurrection, then, as distinguished from that of the immortality of the soul, is one which human reason, as represented in the great schools of Greek philosophy, failed to elaborate. It is purely a dogma of revelation, a fact in the future history of our race which we believe simply upon the authority of the Word of God. Under the Jewish dispensation it was but obscurely indicated. In the fourteenth and nineteenth chapters of the Book of Job there are two well-known passages in which that patriarch seems to express his firm conviction that his body, now wasted by disease and doomed to death, should yet be raised again. In the one he says, with unutterable pathos, "O that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldest keep me secret, until Thy wrath be past, that Thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again?" ² Then, as if in answer to his own question, he adds, "All the days of my appointed time (*i.e.* the time during which he was hidden in the grave) will I wait, till my

¹ Acts xvii. 18, 32. There is some reason to think that the practice of embalming, which prevailed in Egypt, was connected with the idea that the spirit might revisit its earthly tabernacle, and thus indicated a hope that the bodies of the dead should rise again. Even if this were more certain than it is, still it would not in any way invalidate the statement that pagan philosophy in its highest form failed to conceive or formulate anything like the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. See Westcott on the "Gospel of the Resurrection," chap. i. § 51.

² Job xiv. 13-15.

change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands." This seems very explicit. Yet many good commentators, of whom Delitzsch is one (and the Revised Version follows them), put all the verbs in the optative mood, as expressing a pious wish rather than a confident hope. And this they do on the ground that, while the Hebrew will admit of either rendering, this is the only one that will bring the words into harmony with the sentiments to which Job is giving utterance in the context. The other passage is: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."¹ This, too, seems a very plain statement, on the part of Job, of his belief in his own bodily resurrection to take place at the latter day, when his Redeemer should stand upon the earth. The only difficulty here is in regard to the meaning of the words: "Yet in my flesh shall I see God." These words are correctly rendered in the Revised Version: "Yet from my flesh shall I see God," which may mean either "apart from my flesh," "in a disembodied state," or "looking out from my flesh as the dwelling-place of the soul." The latter view will be preferred by those who look simply at the passage by itself, especially at the words which

¹ Job xix. 25-27.

follow the disputed clause: "Whom I shall see for myself, and *mine eyes* shall behold." The former will be adopted by those who have come on other grounds to the conclusion that an explicit announcement of the resurrection in the Book of Job would be a violent anachronism, only to be explained on the hypothesis of interpolation. Such an announcement there is undoubtedly in the closing chapter of the Book of Daniel, though it is remarkable, as indicating the gradual way in which this doctrine was unfolded, that the language there used would rather suggest that the predicted rising from the dead would not be universal: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." ¹

It is in the New Testament, however, that we find this doctrine formally announced and fully opened up. The conception is one which, as we have seen, reason failed to suggest, and against which many formidable objections may be raised. Yet, when once suggested, it has this in its favour: that soul and body are so intimately associated in every thought and action of our lives that we can hardly conceive of the soul's conscious existence hereafter apart from bodily organs. In other words, we have an instinctive feeling that soul and body are the constituent elements, the essential factors, of human nature. It was to this instinct that our Lord appealed when He refuted the Sadducees by referring to the words, "I am the

¹ Dan. xii. 2.

God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,"¹ adding, by way of comment, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." But clear as the teaching of our Lord on this subject is, the resurrection occupies a still larger place in the writings of His apostles. And for a very obvious reason. The great burden of their testimony to an unbelieving world was that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. This was the great credential of His divine mission, the attestation by the Father of His finished work, the proof that He was able to save to the uttermost. And if the resurrection of Christ were a proved and admitted fact, there was no insuperable difficulty in the way of believing in a future resurrection on a wider scale. Nay, the one was but the germ, the type, the earnest of the other. Hence it is that in the apostolic writings, while the resurrection of the wicked is assumed, the emphasis is laid upon the resurrection of the saints, and that is traced to the union that subsists between them and their risen Lord.

It would seem that we owe the fullest and clearest statement on this subject which the Word of God contains to the circumstance that there were some in the Church of Corinth, even in the days of Paul, who said that there was no resurrection of the dead. Probably they held, with Hymenæus and Philetus, that the resurrection was past already—that it meant nothing more than the spiritual quickening of dead souls. We need not stay to refute a heresy long ago exploded by

¹ Matt. xxii. 32.

the Apostle Paul. Some have maintained, chiefly on the ground of certain expressions in the fifth chapter of 2nd Corinthians, that the resurrection of the believer takes place immediately after death, when, being stripped of his earthly tabernacle, he puts on a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And there are others still who hold that at the second coming of Christ the saints shall be provided with spiritual bodies entirely different from those in which they had lived and died on earth. In answer to both these views, it is sufficient to say that it would be an abuse of words to call any such transmigration of the soul from one body to another a resurrection; that we are expressly told that those who "sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake," that all "that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth";¹ and, finally, that such an investiture of the soul with an entirely new body, whether at death or at the day of judgment, has no sort of resemblance to the resurrection of Christ, which is the type or pattern of the resurrection of His people.

Resurrection obviously implies the essential identity of the risen body with that which died, but along with this there may be a large amount of circumstantial difference. It was so in the case of Jesus Christ. The same body rose which had been crucified and buried. When the women visited the sepulchre in which He had been laid, they found it empty. The angels testified, "He is risen from the dead; and

¹ Dan. xii. 2 ; John v. 28, 29.

behold, He goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see Him.”¹ He appeared to His disciples the same evening, and shewed them His hands and His side. He convinced them, by the plainest evidence addressed to the senses of sight and touch and hearing, that He who had been crucified was now risen. Yet it is plain from the whole narrative that under this identity there was a very considerable change. He was not recognised even by one who knew Him so well and loved Him so ardently as Mary Magdalene until He spoke. The tones of His voice were still the same. His outward appearance was altered. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus did not at first identify Him even by His voice, though, when He did make Himself known to them, perhaps by the old familiar way in which He asked a blessing on their evening meal, they then remembered the strange, indescribable impression which His tones had made upon them at a time when they supposed Him to be a perfect stranger. “Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us in the way?” His sudden and mysterious appearance among His disciples as they were met with closed doors, and the equally sudden way in which He vanished out of their sight, were very different from the manner of His intercourse with them before His death. And this seems to have gone on for a period of forty days, at the close of which, to their unspeakable amazement, they saw Him ascend from the slopes of Olivet into the upper regions of the air, till a cloud

¹ Matt. xxviii. 7.

received Him out of their sight. No doubt there were foreshadowings of this change even while He was with them, as when He was transfigured on the Mount; when He passed unharmed through the midst of those who were seeking to destroy Him; or when He walked upon the waters of the sea of Galilee. But these were only occasional glimpses granted to His disciples, in the days of His humiliation, of that glory which is now the permanent condition of our risen Lord.

In this respect, doubtless, the resurrection of the members of Christ will resemble that of their living and exalted Head. They shall rise with bodies substantially the same as those which they possessed when they fell asleep in Jesus, yet marvellously changed. There is this important difference, however, between the two cases: our Lord's body was raised from the dead before it could see corruption. There is, therefore, no difficulty here as to the way in which the identity was maintained. The only difficulty is the miracle of the restored animation of the lifeless frame, and the further miracle of the sudden change in its properties and powers. But in the case of believers who have died centuries before the second coming of Christ, the difficulty of conceiving that the identical body which was buried shall then be raised to life is very great. For the body soon after death undergoes a process of decomposition. It ceases to be an organised whole, and resolves into its component parts. It becomes simply an agglomerate of oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen,

carbon, calcareous matter, etc. Now, it is of course admitted that God could, by an act of omnipotence, gather together all these chemical constituents of the human body, though scattered to the four winds, and reorganise them, in the exercise of the same creative power as that by which He made our common parent of the dust of the ground. But the difficulty is this: the bodies of the dead when decomposed fatten the soil in which they have been laid, enter into the vegetation which that soil produces, and are consumed by the sheep and oxen which browse upon it. These animals we in turn consume, and thus the identical chemical substances may go to constitute the bodies of successive generations of men. It would seem, therefore, to be impossible that the very material of which the body was composed when it was laid in the grave is literally raised again to constitute the resurrection-body, for that material would in some cases require to be distributed among very many bodies. Nor is it necessary that it should. For the identity of the body may be preserved though the particles of which it is formed are completely changed. It is well known that even at present our bodies are in a state of continual flux. A process of waste and reparation is going on from day to day. The general opinion is that every particle of the body is changed within a period of seven years, yet no one imagines that by this process the identity of the man, or even of his bodily frame, is in the least affected.

Was not this very difficulty anticipated and removed by the Apostle Paul, when, in answer to the objection, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" he said, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body."¹ Here he seems to teach expressly that the growth of a seed is analogous to the resurrection of the body, at least so far as to throw light upon the relation of the body raised to that previously committed to the dust. The seed committed to the earth apparently decays and dies. But a little germ lives on, and, fed by the decaying matter, pushes its way upward to the light. After a little it begins to throw out roots, thus becoming independent of the nourishment hitherto derived from the parent seed. Then it sends forth first the tender blade, then the hardy stalk, and last of all the full-formed ear, enfolding within its husk a multitude of grains like those from which itself has sprung. We must be careful not to press a mere illustration too far, but these three points of analogy seem to be indicated between this process and the resurrection of the dead. First, there is the death, whether of the seed or of the body, involving decomposition into their constituent

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 35-38.

elements. Then there is the continued existence both in the seed and in the body of a germ—a formative principle of life, with which their identity is bound up. This may for a longer or a shorter period remain dormant and unseen, but it is that which makes resurrection possible, and that which determines the type of the body which is to be. And, finally, in both cases, what rises from the earth shall be very different in appearance from what was sown, and vastly larger than the little germ on which the identity of the two depends.

This illustration, then, seems to throw important light upon what is necessary to preserve the identity of the body in which the saint lives and dies on earth with that in which he shall appear when he awakes on the morning of the resurrection. The great, the essential thing, seems to be a certain germ, a vital force, a formative principle of life. We cannot tell where this principle resides. It may be a mere cell, indistinguishable even under the microscope from any other life-germ, but indestructible and having wrapped up in it the mysterious power of developing in certain favourable circumstances, and with amazing rapidity, into a human body, possessing far higher qualities than that of which it once formed a part, yet still recognisably the same. Some would maintain that this is all that is needed, and that the identity of the bodies of the saints would be preserved even if this germ were to gather round it, and shape into the human form materials very different

from those of which our bodies are now composed—not the chemical constituents of earth, but elements of a finer and more ethereal mould. Delitzsch indeed speaks of God supplying to the disembodied spirit materials similar to those of its former body, taken from the new heavens and new earth that shall spring up phoenix-like from the fires of the final conflagration.¹ But is not the resurrection to precede that great catastrophe? For the Apostle Paul assures the Thessalonians² that those who are alive and remain at the coming of Christ shall not anticipate them which are asleep. The dead in Christ shall rise first; after that the living shall be changed. That is to say, the saints who are found alive upon the earth at the Lord's return shall undergo no change till the dead, summoned by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, have risen from their graves. It is plain, therefore, that the earth cannot have been previously burnt up, nor can the new heavens and earth have been formed to provide fresh material for the bodies of the risen saints.

Apart, however, from the question of the source from which the supposed new material of the resurrection-body might be obtained, we do not think that there is reason to believe that there will be any such essential change in the very elements of which our bodies are composed. For when we look at the model case, the resurrection of our Lord, does He not seem to assert that the material of His body was the same

¹ Delitzsch's "System of Biblical Psychology," chap. vii. § 1.

² 1 Thess. iv. 15, 16.

that it had ever been, when He reassures His terrified disciples with these words, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have."¹ These words of course imply that His was not a mere phantom body, visible indeed, yet impalpable and unreal. But they also seem, taken in their most natural sense, to teach that the constituents of that body were the very material of which human flesh and bones are made. No doubt it was in some respects remarkably altered. It seemed to have the power of appearing and vanishing at the pleasure of its owner, of gliding unperceived into a room, the doors of which were shut, and of rising from the earth and passing beyond the region of the clouds. Our present earthly bodies have no such properties or powers. And it may be said that this is a proof that, although our Lord retained the form and features and general aspect under which He had been previously known to His disciples, yet the chemical constituents of His body must have been wholly different. We think, however, that this is inconsistent with His own statement, that He was still possessed of "flesh and bones." There may have been some mysterious difference in the molecular arrangement of the particles of His body, to adapt it to the heavenly glory to which it was soon to be transferred. The material of which His body was composed may have been more plastic,

¹ Luke xxiv. 38, 39.

more completely under the power of the animating spirit, than in the days of His humiliation. Yet we would shrink from saying that the ingredients which entered into its constitution were entirely different. And if this be the limit of the change which the body of our Lord underwent when He rose from the dead, there is no reason to think that it will be otherwise with the bodies of His people, for they shall be fashioned like unto the body of His glory. It is true we read that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,"¹ but that is explained by the clause which follows, "neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Blood is the very symbol and seat of that frail corruptible life which we now possess. "Flesh and blood" therefore describe the human body, constituted as it now is, organised to endure for little more than threescore years and ten at furthest. "Flesh and bones" denote rather the essential framework of the human body, which, when raised from the dead, shall be divested of all those elements of corruption that have clung to it here on earth.²

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 50.

² It will be observed that we have assumed throughout that we may form at least a probable conception of the nature of the bodies of the risen saints from what we are told of the properties of the body of the risen Saviour during the forty days which intervened between His resurrection and ascension. We are quite aware that this assumption is open to attack on either side. Some may hold that we thus ascribe certain marvellous powers to the bodies of the redeemed, forgetting that Christ, as the Son of God, had miraculous energy at His command; while others may say that we do not ascribe to them a condition sufficiently exalted, since their bodies are to be conformed to the "body of His glory," with which He was not endued till the day of His exalta-

The words of our Lord in answer to the Sadducees, "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven,"¹ have been understood by some to mean that the angels in heaven have bodies of a refined ethereal texture, and that to these the bodies of the risen saints shall be conformed. But our Lord was not speaking to the question about the nature of the resurrection-body, but about the continuance in heaven of the sexual relations and the sexual intercourse of earth. That the angels are pure spirits, without any bodily organs, appears to be the clear teaching of Scripture. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we read, "Are they not all ministering spirits?" And our Lord says to His disciples, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." Nor do we think that the words of our Lord imply that after the resurrection there will be no distinction of sex. We read in the Book of Genesis, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."¹ We believe that of these two original characteristics of the human race the latter is at least as indelible as the former. Male and female are the complements of each other. Both are needed to constitute a perfect human nature. It is true there will

tion. The subject is one on which it were foolish to dogmatise, but the fact that the view here advanced is thus assailed from opposite sides is rather a presumption in its favour, on the principle, "*in medio tutissimus ibis*." The view we have taken has the support of the late Dr Milligan in his very valuable monograph on 1 Corinthians xv. "The Resurrection of the Dead," p. 154.

¹ Matt. xxii. 30.

² Gen. i. 27.

be no marriages in heaven, even as there will be no births or deaths, but there will still be manly strength and dignity, womanly grace and beauty, with those endless shades of difference in taste and talent, in genius and spirit, in thought and sentiment which distinguish the sexes here, and which will brighten the fellowship and enhance the joy of heaven itself.

The question naturally suggests itself, Will there be eating and drinking in heaven? Will the resurrection-body require to be thus sustained? It is hard to say. On the one hand, it may be argued that so large a part of the human body is devoted to the purpose of masticating, digesting, and assimilating food that, if these processes were to cease, the body would either have to be altogether reconstructed, or would consist to a large extent of useless organs. On the other hand, one cannot help feeling that there is something gross and earthly about the way in which for the present our bodily life has to be maintained; that after the resurrection "eating and drinking," like "marrying and giving in marriage," will be relegated to the past, and that, if there shall still be waste of tissue needing to be repaired, the process of reparation will be less carnal than it is now. It does not seem to be a formidable objection to this view that our Lord did on one occasion eat a piece of broiled fish and of an honeycomb before His disciples after He had risen from the dead. For that was a solitary, and may have been a quite exceptional act, designed not to nourish *His* body, but to convince and satisfy *their* minds.

But let us now look a little more closely at the description of the glorified body given by the Apostle Paul in the classical passage on this subject, the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, verses 42-44. We are constrained to reject the interpretation put upon these verses, even by such distinguished exegetes as Godet and Milligan. They understand the sowing here spoken of to refer, not to the act of burial, but to all the earthly life of man. We cannot but regard this as extremely fanciful and far-fetched. The difficulty had been started, "How are the dead raised, and with what body do they come?" The answer was, "Foolish one! that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain," &c. Then, after dwelling a little on the difference between the seed and the plant which springs from it, and upon God's wealth of resource as seen in the infinite variety that prevails in Nature, the apostle goes on to shew how this bears on the resurrection of the dead. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption," &c. It seems almost self-evident that the meaning of the apostle is, that it fares with the human body just as it does with a grain of wheat, when both are committed to the soil. The result is, first corruption, then life—a life richer and more beautiful than that which was surrendered to the power of death. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." That is to say, it is laid in the grave with tendencies to disintegration and

decay already in full and terrible operation. It shall be raised endowed with a constitution destined to endure for ever without decrepitude or failure. "It is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory." That is to say, it is buried with obvious and humbling marks of its fallen state. It shall be raised, not only as completely free from these as Adam was when he was created, but framed after a far more glorious model—the likeness of the Son of Man. "It is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power." Nothing can be weaker or more helpless than a corpse when lowered down into its narrow bed. Yet even before that the body of the very strongest is but feeble compared with what the body of the saint shall be hereafter. New powers shall then be imparted to the body, such as we can hardly conceive of now, but of which we have some indications in the properties of the body of the risen Saviour. "It is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body." This is the weightiest utterance of all. The apostle has reserved to the last the most discriminating point of the whole contrast. This is the distinctive feature of the resurrection-body on which he chiefly dwells, and which is evidently the root or basis of all the other points of difference between it and the body in its present state. And yet, important as the statement is, it is not easy to determine precisely what it means. "A spiritual body !" What is it ? Is it not a paradox, almost a contradiction in terms ?

The best key to the interpretation of this apparent paradox will be found in the use of the same words "natural" and "spiritual," by the same apostle, in this very Epistle, and that too for the purpose of drawing a somewhat similar contrast. Here he speaks of *σῶμα ψυχικόν* and *σῶμα πνευματικόν*. In the second chapter of the same epistle he speaks of *ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος* and *πνευματικὸς ἄνθρωπος*. In the latter case he evidently means to contrast the man who is entirely under the sway and influence of the *ψυχὴ* with the man who is at least mainly under the influence of the *πνεῦμα*. The *ψυχὴ* is the principle of natural life, physical, and intellectual, and moral. The *πνεῦμα* is the new and higher principle of spiritual life, implanted or awakened in a man by the Holy Spirit in regeneration, by which he is linked on to God and to the things that are spiritual and divine. The *ψυχὴ* is not, like the *σὰρξ*, a sinful principle, to be eradicated and destroyed, but an essential part of our nature, to be conserved and sanctified. Hence, when a man becomes *πνευματικὸς*, being regenerated by the Spirit of God, he does not lose the *ψυχὴ*, for we find Paul saying to the Thessalonians, "I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." But the *πνεῦμα* becomes from that time forward the predominating, inspiring, regulating principle of the man. Now let us look at the contrast before us in the light of the apostle's previous use of the same words. The natural—that is, the psychic or soulish, or, as Dr

Milligan prefers to call it, sensuous body—is a body adapted to the necessities of the ψυχῇ. The spiritual body is a body adapted to the higher necessities of the πνεύμα. When a *man* is said to be ψυχικὸς, and not πνευματικὸς, this implies that he is in a sinful, an unregenerate state. But when the body is said to be ψυχικόν, and not πνευματικόν, this does not necessarily imply sin, but only a condition of inferiority to that occupied by one who has a spiritual body. Thus our Lord himself, when He was manifest in the flesh, assumed a body liable to all the limitations and infirmities common to man. He “was made a little lower than the angels.” He was made a partaker of flesh and blood, in all points like unto His brethren, yet without sin. His was then a natural body, a body adapted to the psychic life of earth, and only when He rose from the dead did He receive a spiritual body, a body suited to the spiritual life of heaven. This is indicated by the use of the term πνεῦμα to denote the resurrection-life of Christ, as when He is said to have been “manifest in the flesh and justified in the spirit,” and again, “put to death in the flesh but quickened in the spirit.”¹

What, then, are the distinctive peculiarities by which the spiritual body shall be characterised? Most assuredly the expression does not mean that it will be spiritual, as distinguished from material, in its texture. That is inconceivable and impossible.

¹ See Milligan on the “Resurrection of our Lord,” note 15.

Besides, that would imply that the present body, being $\psi\upsilon\chi\iota\kappa\acute{o}\nu$, is not material, but of the same essence as the soul. No; these qualifying adjectives, as we have seen, do not describe the essence or substance of the body before and after the resurrection. They describe it as in the one case adapted to the uses of the soul, which is the lower, and in the other case to the uses of the spirit, which is the higher principle of life. When we have said this, we are not sure that we can with safety say much more. To imagine to ourselves the condition and the occupations of the saints in glory and the nature of the bodies which they wear is a somewhat unprofitable employment. The sources of reliable information are so scanty that we are tempted to fill up the outline with mere fanciful conjectures. It is but a faint conception that we can form as yet of the nature of the spiritual body, and that mainly from the glimpses given us of our Lord after He had risen from the dead.

1. The bodies of the saints in heaven shall no longer be liable to hunger, or thirst, or weariness, or pain. All these things our Lord experienced in the days of His flesh. He hungered in the wilderness, thirsted on the Cross, sat weary on the well at Sychar, agonised in Gethsemane, was crucified on Calvary. We cannot conceive of His being subject to any such infirmities or sorrows now. Neither shall His people when they reach the better country.¹ "They shall hunger no

¹ Rev. vii. 16; xxi. 4.

more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." " God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

2. There will be no deformity or defect, no blemish or uncomeliness about the bodies of the saints in glory.¹ " Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped ; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." There will be no congenital deformity, no mutilation, the result of violence, or accident, or disease. Each redeemed body will then be perfect and complete—nay, fair and comely, fairer than that of Adam or Eve at their creation, for the body of our humiliation will be fashioned on no lower type than the body of Christ's glory. There will therefore be no liability to loss or deterioration, whether from injury, or accident, or gradual decay. The bodies of the saints shall be adorned with all the beauty of immortal youth.

3. Their bodies will be possessed of greatly enhanced, perhaps altogether novel, powers. Here we are limited to a certain spot of earth. If we move beyond it in the exercise of our own organs of locomotion our progress is slow, and small, and fatiguing. And even with the help of the marvellous machinery of modern times, a lengthened journey is as tedious as

¹ Isa. xxxv. 5, 6.

well as an expensive thing. There is every reason to think that the bodies of the risen saints will, like that of their divine Master, be endued with the power of moving with inconceivable ease and rapidity from place to place. And as distance will not then be the obstacle to communication which it is now, so it may prove that physical difficulties, material obstacles, that impede us now, will be no hindrances hereafter. It may be that sight and hearing will be much more acute and powerful than at present, and it is even conceivable that other organs and new senses will be given us, to facilitate our acquaintance with the objects and our intercourse with the inhabitants of the heavenly regions.

4. There will be nothing in the spiritual body to interrupt constant communion with God, or to mar that perfect joy in Him which the spirit longs for. Our present bodies are a hindrance to prolonged exercises of devotion. Food makes them heavy. The want of it makes them faint. Often when the spirit is willing the flesh is weak. But the spiritual body will be a fit partner for the glorified soul. The saints in glory will never be oppressed with drowsiness or lethargy in their spiritual exercises. The body, instead of being a drag and hindrance, will be the swift and willing instrument of the soul in its acts of service or its songs of praise. There will be no conflict, as there is now, between the desire for carnal pleasure and the thirst for holy joy. Body and soul and spirit shall there be lovingly united in the pursuit and en-

joyment of the highest blessedness—communion with the God of love.

5. The spiritual body will be the perfect outward expression of the spiritual nature within. This is almost implied in the definition of the spiritual body as one that is perfectly adapted to the uses of the spirit. For there could hardly be this perfect adaptation without a perfect harmony between them. Just as the Arab horse responds instinctively to the slightest touch of the reins, and even to the accents of his master's voice; just as two bosom friends can anticipate each other's wishes and almost divine what is passing in each other's breast, so there will be the most prompt and perfect sympathy between the soul and body of the saint in glory. And this active sympathy and harmonious co-operation, if it does not prove that the one is already the exact counterpart of the other, is sure to lead to this result. We see something of this formative process going on even here on earth, the gross earthly material body taking on the mould and impress given to it by the soul within. Do we not sometimes see the body which in youth was full of life and activity grow dull and sluggish and inert, because the man has basely surrendered himself to sensual indulgence? And on the other hand, have we never seen a naturally stolid, heavy countenance lighted up with intelligence when the dormant energies of the man's nature have been quickened by the grace of God? If this be so with our present earthly bodies, how much more will the heavenly body yield itself to

every movement of the spirit that dwells within, vibrating to the slightest touch, and revealing, like some translucent medium, the thoughts and feelings of the inner man.

We may rest assured of this, that memory, that wondrous faculty of the human soul, will not be lost but greatly quickened when we reach the perfection of our nature in heaven above. If so, then we shall certainly remember our earthly friends and recognise them there. But the means of recognition will not be altogether what they were on earth. So far as we knew them by some defect, infirmity, or uncouth peculiarity, that source of identification will exist no longer. We have reason, therefore, to believe that we shall know them chiefly by the expression of their countenances. Their faces will be luminous with those excellences of character which they had acquired on earth, and by means of these we shall readily recognise them. Who can doubt that Isaiah's countenance will glow with heavenly rapture, and John's with seraphic love, and Paul's with Christ-like zeal? And in like manner, though in a less pronounced degree, the faces of those friends whom we have known and loved on earth will shine, like the face of Moses when he descended from the mount, with the goodness and gentleness, the truth and candour, the purity and uprightness, the humility and heavenliness of mind by which they had been severally characterised.

We have said nothing as yet of the dark side of this subject, the resurrection of the wicked, for the

Bible says little of it, and we can learn nothing of it, except by way of contrast, from the resurrection of our Lord. But the contrast suggested is something very awful. If the faces of the risen saints shall shine with ever-growing brightness in the beauties of holiness, will not the fierce passions and burning lusts of the ungodly, no longer hidden in their hearts but now flaming in their very faces, be something terrible to behold? If the Spirit of glory and of God will rest upon an Abraham and Isaiah, a Peter and a John, how utterly diabolical will be the countenance of a Herod, a Nero, a Cæsar Borgia, and many more, unknown to history, who like them have given themselves up to all that is base and brutal!

How solemn a thought that the body is an essential and integral part of our nature! Is it to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, or the hold of devils? Every one of us is engaged, whether he will or not, in modelling a statue which is to be his monument to all eternity. Every thought or feeling that we cherish, every word we speak, every act we do, is a blow of the chisel, which is carving it either into a devil or a saint. At present we are working in the dark. The studio is imperfectly lighted, and the rough-hewn figure is hidden beneath the folds of conventional propriety, religious hypocrisy, or natural reserve. But the day is coming when that statue shall be unveiled. Will that be the day of a hypocrite's detection, or the day of the manifestation of a son of God?

NOTE TO PAGE 45.

DR DALE'S interesting and valuable volume of "Discourses on Christian Doctrine," was published after the foregoing papers were prepared for the press. Six of the twelve Discourses bear upon the Incarnation and the Atonement. It is too late now to enter on a discussion of the views which are there set forth with all the felicity of diction and wealth of illustration characteristic of the esteemed author. But one or two passages may be indicated corroborative of the doctrine of the Kenosis given in our first paper, and one at least bearing on the subject of our second paper, with which we are constrained to disagree.

It may appear to some that we have placed the statement that our Lord was not omniscient in the days of His flesh on too narrow a basis, when we found it on the single passage in which He disclaims the knowledge of the time of His second coming. In answer to that we have to say that we prefer on such a subject to have absolutely sure ground on which to stand, and that a statement from the lips of our Lord Himself, so clear and unequivocal that it cannot be got over, is better evidence than any number of inferences more or less conclusive. But we are by no means insensible to the value of such secondary considerations as the following, adduced by Dr Dale in his Discourse upon the Humanity of our Lord :—

"Mark, who tells us that one morning, as He was walking from Bethany to Jerusalem, 'He hungered,' adds—'and seeing a fig-tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon.' He did not know, any more than Peter and John knew, whether there were any figs on the tree until He came

near enough to it to examine it; and then He found that there were none. On two occasions, when there were great crowds of people about Him, many of whom had travelled far to hear Him, He determined to give them food before He sent them away; and on each occasion He asked his disciples, 'How many loaves have ye?' When He asked Philip on one of these occasions, 'Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat?' John tells us that 'this He said to prove Him; for He Himself knew what He would do.' Yes—our Lord knew *what He Himself intended to do*; but to suppose that He knew, before He was told, how much bread the disciples had, or that there was a lad with them who had 'five barley loaves and two fishes,' is to destroy the reality of the narratives, and even to suggest that the story of our Lord may be full of illusions. . . . At Bethany, when He saw the great sorrow of Mary for the death of Lazarus, He said, 'Where have ye laid him?' Who can imagine that He already knew where Lazarus had been buried, and that when He Himself was so deeply agitated He put the question simply to keep up the appearance that He was like other men.

"Surprise is an emotion which can be experienced only by those whose knowledge is limited. It is occasioned by the occurrence or discovery of what had not been expected. To a mind of infinite knowledge surprise is impossible. But again and again our Lord uses language which, if it represented His real feeling and thought—and to suppose that it did not is irreverence and blasphemy—discloses His astonishment."¹

Dr Dale has an important Note on the Kenosis, with the whole of which we substantially agree. Two brief extracts will sufficiently indicate the light in which he regards this profoundly difficult question:—

"It is difficult to believe that Paul really held that during His earthly life He ceased, in the divine sphere of His activity, to exert His divine powers. For it was Paul's faith, that in Him 'all things consist'—are

¹ "Christian Doctrine," R. W. Dale, LL.D. Ch. iii. pp. 61, 62.

sustained and held together in their divinely determined order. The powers by which from age to age He sustains and holds together the whole creation were still exerted while He 'dwelt among us,' or the creation would have sunk back into chaos. Can we conceive that His 'powers' were still active when they had ceased to be His? Or, if they were still active, can we conceive that He was unconscious of their activity?"¹

"The mystery is impenetrable. We cannot hope to understand how human nature still retaining human limitations can be drawn into union with the life of the Eternal, or how the life of the Eternal can be drawn into union with human nature. We can but contemplate with reverence and joy the revelation of the wonder. A glory from God rests on the Son of His love. The Son knows that He is one with the Father. It is as if with the gradual unfolding of His intellectual and moral powers He gradually became conscious, under human conditions, of His eternal life with God. This at least seems to be suggested by the facts of His earthly history. He was divine in the centre of His life, and He knew that He was divine; He was conscious of sharing the life of God."

We thoroughly believe this; and hence those occasional flashes of divine glory even in the days of His humiliation, seen by those who followed Him, in the measure of their spiritual discernment. How striking in this view the difference between the testimony of the practical, matter-of-fact Peter, and the contemplative, emotional John. The one says, "We were eye-witnesses of His majesty,"² but that was the outward and visible majesty seen once upon the holy mount. The other says, "We beheld His glory, a glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,"³ but that was the inward and spiritual glory that shone from Him day by day.

Dr Dale has a somewhat full and elaborate Note on "The Limitations of our Lord's Knowledge," in relation

¹ Note N. pp. 311, 312.

² 2 Peter i. 16.

³ John i. 14.

to the question of His authority on critical questions. With the greater part of that Note we are in full agreement. The only thing we regret is this, that he has not said with sufficient clearness that, whatever limitations there may have been in our Lord's knowledge, we may safely count on this, that they have not in any way affected His teaching, so as to render that inaccurate and misleading, even in the minutest point. We shrink from the idea that the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Prophet of His Church, was mistaken in any of those utterances of His which are recorded in the written Word. We do not quite relish a sentence such as this: "For example: it is hardly conceivable that our Lord had no *working* conception of the order of the physical universe; but there is nothing in His recorded words to suggest that His conception was different from that which was common among His countrymen."¹ Why should there be? He did not come to correct men's conceptions on subjects such as these. But, on the other hand, is it not true that even in regard to them He has not said anything which even the most advanced science can convict of error?

There is a Note to the Discourse on Sin which bears directly upon a point raised and discussed in our second paper, which we take leave to say is very unsatisfactory. "The doctrine of Paul on the relation between the sin of Adam and the sin and death of his descendants was probably a doctrine of the Jewish schools."² Then, after referring to "The Apocalypse of Baruch" and "The Fourth Book of Ezra," he says: "These books may be assumed to represent the rabbinical theology of their time; and, if they do, Paul may have learnt the substance of his doctrine of Original Sin from the rabbis at whose feet he sat before he became a Christian. . . . The doctrine was, in *substance*, an affirmation of the solidarity of the human race in sin and in mortality; that solidarity is assumed by the Christian redemption.

¹ Note F. p. 289.

² Note W. pp. 325, 326.

. . . It is, however, in every way deserving of notice that, although the Christian redemption assumes that the race has fallen, this particular conception of the manner of the fall is neither expressed nor implied in any passage of the New Testament except Rom. v. 12-21 and 1 Cor. xv. 22. The truths which are of the substance of the Christian Gospel hold together; they are organically one. . . . But the theory of the relation between Adam and his posterity, which is incidentally stated in Rom. v. 12-21 and 1 Cor. xv. 22, has no such organic relation to the general body of Christian truth."

We confess that this is not pleasant reading. Dr Dale evidently dislikes the apostle's "doctrine of Original Sin," though he hesitates to repudiate it, or to affirm that he knows better. He proceeds, however, to impugn his authority as a teacher on this question, *first*, by suggesting that he may have got the idea from the rabbis; *second*, by remarking, that it is only taught in two passages in his writings; and *third*, that it does not stand in any organic connection with the general body of Christian truth. But what right have we to suppose that Paul borrowed from the rabbis a conception of the way in which sin and death came into the world, which he uses in the greatest of all his Epistles in order to throw important light on the most cardinal doctrine of redemption? Does he not tell the Galatians that he did not receive the Gospel which he preached of man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ?¹ Does he not claim in writing to the Corinthians that his teaching was inspired by the Holy Ghost?² And does he not say, even in regard to a historical matter such as the institution of the Lord's Supper, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you"?³ In regard to the second point, if the apostle's meaning in these two passages is perfectly clear, and this is not denied, is not that enough? How often must a doctrine be taught by an inspired apostle

¹ Gal. i. 11, 12.² 1 Cor. ii. 7-16.³ 1 Cor. xi. 23.

before we are bound to believe it? And as to the third point, granting that it is of more importance to know how sin is to be got rid of than to know how it came in, it will surely not be denied that the doctrine of Original Sin is an essential part of the body of Christian truth, and of that doctrine our relation to the sin of our first parent is one important part. It is true that the apostle introduces the subject as an illustration, to throw light upon the method of our redemption, but then it is such an illustration as goes to the very heart of the matter. As we have endeavoured in the text to shew, it is the only valid analogy that can be adduced to obviate the objections on the score of justice to the doctrine of the Atonement. And, so important is this illustration in the view of the apostle, that he dwells upon it, drawing it out in various particulars, setting it in various lights, and carefully bringing out the points of contrast as well as the features of resemblance.

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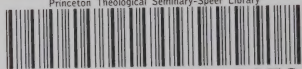
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